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NORTHLAND TRAILS



S.C. ELLS



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NORTHLAND TRAILS

by *Sidney Larke* S.C. ELLS

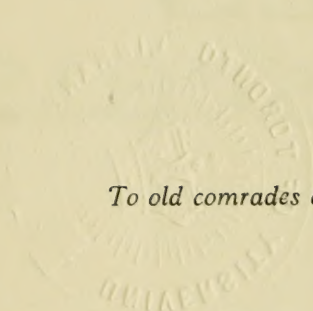
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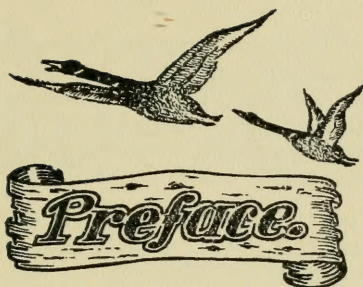
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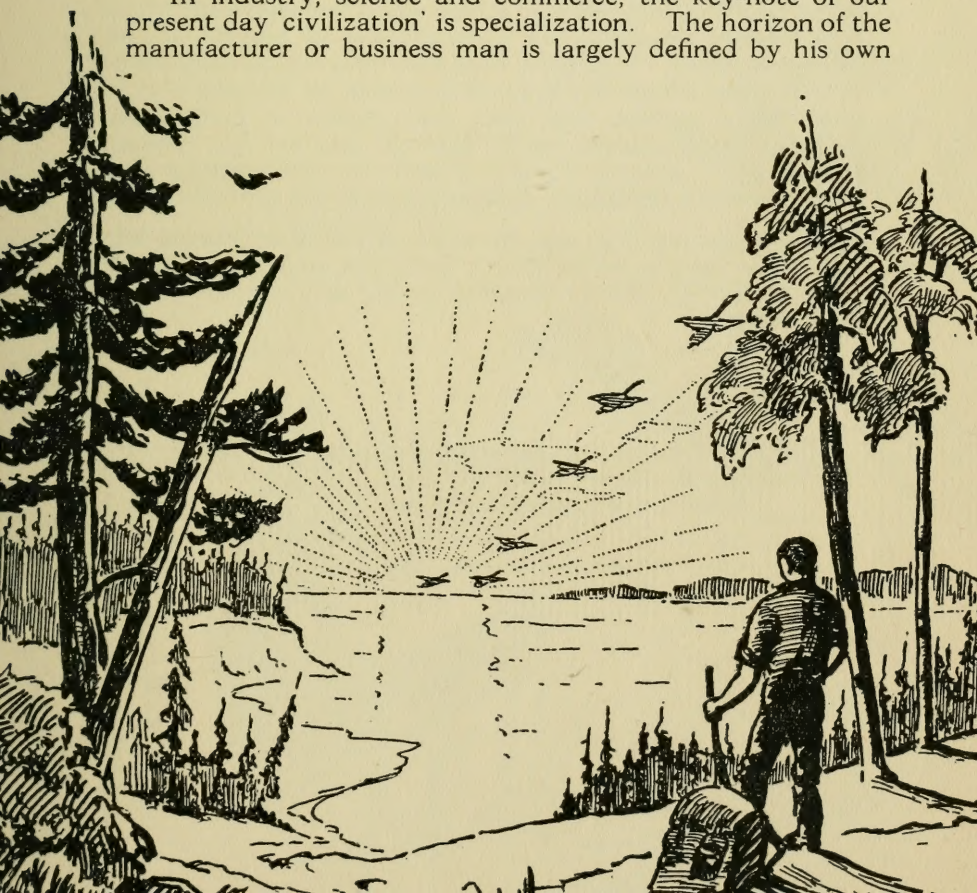
To old comrades of paddle, tracking line and trail



In the following pages, the writer has assembled a group of verses and short stories. For the most part, scenes are laid in that part of Canada known as the North West Territories.

In referring to what is popularly known as "Canada's Last Great North," statistics indicating land and water areas, population, natural resources, and meteorological data become quite inadequate. The writer has therefore attempted to convey something more vital than mere statistics—the *atmosphere of the great North land and the spirit of its people.*

In industry, science and commerce, the key-note of our present day 'civilization' is specialization. The horizon of the manufacturer or business man is largely defined by his own



interests. The thought of the physicist, the chemist, the engineer, the medical specialist, is focussed on some particular phase of his own calling. It is unfortunate that, with notable exceptions, the 'all round' man of even a quarter of a century ago, has largely disappeared. More and more we are retiring into our own individual cells.

For many years, and in many parts of Canada, the writer has been associated with various branches of engineering work. Like many other engineers, he has visited out-of-the-way places, has seen unusual sights, and has had opportunity for observation of certain phases of life which are perhaps not properly appreciated by those engaged in other forms of activity. It is hoped that the following pages may possibly be of interest to occupants of other 'cells'.

Incidentally it may be noted that, many, many times, the writer has regretted that his training at school and university did not include an introduction into short story writing. The curricula of our universities are crowded with such a variety of 'ologies' that to include a short course in short story writing need not appear far fetched. Many engineers wander far afield, and in the careers of all are not a few incidents which might easily constitute the basis of tales of interest and of educative value. But many engineers have not the confidence to make the plunge, have never had even an introduction to short story writing, and with their return to civilization, incidents and pictures rapidly fade out and are lost forever. One has but to listen to a group of such men reminiscing during an idle hour, to realize the aggregate loss to the general public.

The following lines and sketches, jotted down during idle moments, make no pretension to literary or artistic perfection. They are merely a few 'thoughts by the way' by one of 'the other fellows'.

—S. C. ELLS.

* * * *

*"All are architects of fate working in the walls of time
Some with massive deeds and great,
Some with ornaments of rhyme."*

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The North

O land of far horizons! O Empire yet to be!
Thy boundaries leap the latitudes to ice-bound Arctic Sea;
Masterful, untamed wilderness of lakes and rivers broad,
Primitive, grim, and naked, fresh from the hand of God;
"Let but the fit survive"!—still runs thine ancient law,
Drawn in the shadowy dawn of time, based upon tooth and
claw,
And the timid curse thy bondage, and fear and hate thy will,
While the daring curse thy harshness—but cursing, love thee
still!

O land of generous friendships,
Of stream and lonely trail,
Welded by summer's blazing heat,
Tempered by winter's gale;
Tested through lean and hungry days,—
Through the star-spangled night
Brightened by leaping, ruddy flame
Of cheerful camp fire bright;
In memories' mellowed after-glow
Old friendships live again—
Choking snow a-weltering
Across a wind-swept plain,
Foam-laced rocks a-dripping
Where crested waters leap,
Or nameless vales a-drowsing
Where chequered shadows sleep.

O land of spacious freedom
For those who hear thy call,
When sham and tawdry tinsel
And gaudy glitter pall.
Freedom from smug convention,
From trick'ry and petty strife,
And syncopated tinkle,
Aping the Song of Life;
Freedom from tedious treadmill,
Freedom to blaze new trails,
Over the wind-swept hill tops,
Down through the shadowy vales,
For there's music in honking clangor,
And joy in the winds sad wail,
Friendship in empty spaces,
Peace in the stormy gale!

White Water



Countless rapids, heavy and light, interrupt the courses of the many, many streams which wind across the Canadian northland. Where water is heavy and fast and channels rock strewn and tortuous, paddles become useless toys, and poles—the points iron shod or charred by fire—must be used. Only those who have personally handled canoes through really difficult—and dangerous—rapids, can know the thrilling exaltation that such an experience may bring.

White Water

The leafy lanes call gypsy folk back to the greenwood trees,
The ocean lanes call sailormen across the heaving seas,
Winding o'er nameless lake and hill where solemn silence
 broods.

The deep snow trails call trappers, to lonely solitudes;
And countless rivers hurry north to join the brimming seas,—
Wet trails for frail fur-piled canoes, the northlands argosies—
But where they surge whitecrested, o'er ledge and rocky shoal,
They rouse the pulse of rivermen—the men of paddle and pole!

* * * *

Down peaceful sunlit waterway the squaws on bended knee
Have swung the flashing paddles, in stolid unity,
But now green walls come crowding in and dappled shadows
fall

As softly up the valley comes white water's siren call;
And the soft call swiftly merges in mocking challenge grim,
From tossing crested waters below the rapid's rim,
And the thrilling, taunting challenge stirs exulting bowman's
soul

As he crouches, eager, waiting, poising trusty seasoned pole.

The bowman and the helmsman stand like swordsmen brought
to bay.

Bow and stern the tough poles flicker 'midst the spume of
flying spray,

And they read the twisting channel in each eddy, pitch and swirl.

And they skirt the broken water where the crested combers
curl.

And the humdrum world's forgotten—how the purple pages
turn

In the flashing, surging waters where the treacherous "kettles" churn!—

For men stake their strength and courage—and they'd stake
their very souls—

When they write the northland's—sagas, when their pens are
fire-charred poles!



Every individual piece of trapped fur that reaches the market has its own individual history. Many of these unrecorded histories, if written, would be of engrossing interest, intensely human, crudely elemental, at times tragic.

Ostensibly the trapping of fur rests on the motive of monetary reward. Actually its foundations are more obscure—lie much deeper. True, at the end of the fall, winter or spring hunt, the trapper attempts to trade his furs to the best advantage. In reality, however, consciously or subconsciously, he has already had his real reward—in the gratification of the age-old instinct of the hunt, in the elemental satisfaction of the kill, in the exhilaration of pitting human cunning against that of the Wood Folk in their native haunts.

Apart from minor details, the incident noted below came within the writer's observation in 1934.

Silver Fox

Here and there, in towering cliffs high overhead, gleaming windows indicated the presence of some belated office worker. The lower levels of the man-made canyon blazed with light. Muffled pedestrians lowered their heads as they faced the snow-laden gale that swept the broad drifted pavement, shrieked about unseen cornices, filled the black night above with voices of the storm.

Meanwhile, in the warmth and luxury of softly-shaded salon, a lady absentmindedly stroked with daintily gloved fingers the shimmering fur of a silver fox, returned it to the sensitive and caressing hands of the saleswoman, drew embossed cheque book from monogrammed hand-bag. Thoughtlessly she filled in the pink slip; a uniformed attendant swung open a heavily grilled door. A subdued scent of violets filled the cosy interior of the gleaming car that moved from the curb and purred resistlessly through the driving snow. For a moment the saleswoman impulsively buried her face in the soft warm fur. Almost inaudibly she murmured: "If only she knew!"

* * * *

On green-clad hill, across the sweep of empty plain, along the shadowed windings of nameless forest stream, for many moons a truce had reigned between hunters and hunted. But now the days of summer were gone; the truce about to end. Meanwhile, through drowsy summer days and the long after-glow of long northern twilight, Joe Pelequin and his woman, Rose Marie, had idled about the "Fort", abandoning themselves to enervating luxury of weather-worn tar-paper roof, iron stove, unlimited lard. *Dolce far niente!*

Already the breath of fall was in the air; of a morning frost sparkled on the rank grasses that bordered the trail; hills and headlands were a blaze of yellow and gold. Gabbling on sandy bar and in sanctuary of quiet reed bed, geese and ducks were marshalling their companies and battalions for the long flight from the friendly shelter of the north. A vague unrest brooded over land and water.

Instinctively—even as bird and beast—Pelequin reacted to the signs of the changing seasons. The time had come to once more assemble gear of camp and trap-line—to prepare for months of remote solitude and lonely isolation. From well-oiled rifle to sharp buckskin needle nothing must be forgotten. Meanwhile there were nets to set and fish to catch—for the wretched starving train dogs must be made fit for

the brutal hardship and cruelty of the winter trails. There were moccasins and stout garments to mend, snowshoes, toboggans and harness to overhaul. About the cabin, along the shore, and where clumsy floats bobbed solemnly between deeply driven net stakes, the tempo of life quickened under a new impulse.

Day after day, through morning mist and autumn haze, disciplined wedges of geese and ducks were reluctantly winging their way toward the south. Day after day, singly or in pairs, canoes were turning their prows toward the north, bound for far-away trapping grounds. Toward the end of September, while blustering snow squalls dimmed crested hill and distant headland, Pelequin's canoe followed. Among the ragged willows and alders that fringed the shore, as best they could, followed the train dogs.



"Towards the end of September Pelequin's canoe followed"

Twisting paddle, thrusting pole, straining tracking line! Sluggish backwaters, dappled with the woodland's tarnished gold, rushing streams flecked with gleaming foam, lonely lakes already fringed with young ice, slowly faded astern. Sweat-stained harness and galling packs! Heartbreaking portages that climbed steeply up and up over wet and slippery masses of rock, that wound their way through tangled mazes of fallen timber, that led from island to island across treacherous bog and slough, knee deep with stinking crusted slime—these had felt the tread of mocassined feet staggering under heavy loads; of burdened dogs tortured by cutting lashings of ill-adjusted packs. Yet night by night a ruddy camp-fire's wavering beacon moved ever farther north. Four weeks had passed ere Pelequin coiled his tracking line for the last time, stowed poles and paddles under the thwarts, and dragged his travel-scarred canoe—sole visible link with the great outer world—up the river bank through snow-encumbered bushes.

Now, cut off from the so-called comforts and amenities of civilization, dependent wholly on his own resourcefulness and strength, he must stand alone. Now he must summon to his aid the years of training in woodcraft and in the subtle art of trapping—if need be, day after day, must face undiscouraged, empty traps set with cunning skill. Now, apart from Rose Marie, for months to come, his companions were to be his dogs and his toboggan, his rifle, his axe, his traps. So far as he was concerned, kingdoms and states might crash, civilization itself collapse in bloody ruin, without causing a single ripple on the surface of his daily routine. Now, hundreds of miles from the nearest "Fort", the real business of life was to begin.

* * * *

The empty north is as full of tragedy as are the crowded cities. Through its snowy wastes still runs the primal law—"Let but the fit survive". Among the Wood Folk, great and small, ever relentlessly the strong prey upon the weak; ever unseen dangers—and death itself—stalk the steps of the lone trapper. Overnight the maelstrom of screaming gale and hissing snow may turn the land into a ghostly and fantastic world of rounded mounds of white, obliterating every vestige of a trail. A keen bladed axe, twisting from the weakened grip of numbed fingers in ice-sheathed gauntlets, may glance from brittle iron-hard wood. Where streams run fast, snow bridges may obscure the black naked menace of gurgling water below, and to break through, encumbered with snowshoes, all too often spells stark tragedy.

* * * *



"Heartbreaking portages that wound up and up over masses of rock."

Along the twisting windings of white highways and by-ways the harsh and inexorable routine of a frozen world moved stiffly. Here and there trampled patches of snow—gay with splashes of crusted crimson—marked a rendezvous where, cheek by jowl, Life and Death had causally foregathered for a little. Through the white wilderness wound the tortuous loops of Cree river—*grande route* across Pelequin's trapping domain. On its frozen snow-covered surface ran the trapper's trail, broken deep and narrow by long trail shoes, polished hard and smooth by the stout oak toboggan. On either hand the rolling country stretched away to the horizon—muskeg and slough, timber-land and thicket, valley and hill, grimly inscrutable. Across its hummocky mantle of white, other trails, now drifted full, now open and clean, wound in and out to silent haunts of marten and mink, of otter and fox—to the domed fastnesses of beaver and water-rats. But, where black and steamy waters rushed tumultuously between ice-sheathed rocky walls, the river trail climbed the bank. Here, in the friendly shelter of sturdy spruce, stood Pelequin's smoke-stained teepee.

Ever followed by his wallowing dogs, for five days Pelequin had tramped his far-flung trap-lines. Lean and hard, frost-bitten and ragged, he had visited his traps. But wolverines were abroad—of the victims of his skill only mutilated carcasses and torn fur remained. By night, in the shelter of brush windbreaks, spartanlike he had crouched beside the cheery fire, and from its heart of black and gold had drawn new life and strength. Now once more he was back-tracking to his river trail—to the teepee beside the noisy rapid,—to Rose Marie!

On the river itself, a mile below the rapid, fortune seemed to smile. In a trap casually set beside the trail, a silver fox had sniffed the irresistible bait of moulded tallow. Before he could climb the bank to his forest sanctuary, the bitter strychnine concealed within had done its work. Near the farther shore, etched against the snow, lay the stiff dark form.

The swiftly fading twilight of the short winter day had long since died in the west. From zenith to horizon, northern lights softly billowed in gauzy scarves of gorgeous color, paling myriad glittering steel-blue stars. In the half-light Pelequin hurriedly studied the contour of the smooth snowy surface of the stream above and below, slipped moccasined feet into harness of long trail shoes, and left the safety of the trail. A dozen strides and, gathering up the silky form, with a smile he turned to retrace his steps. But even as he pivoted in his tracks the surface of the snow parted ahead, above, below. Even as instinctively he hurled his light burden from him, he found himself struggling in the sweep of the icy cur-

rent. In swirling water, frantically clawing at sharp edges of wet and slippery ice, he fought to free himself from the deadly drag of heavy webbed shoes. The thong fastenings of buckskin, tightened by the wet, resisted every effort. A cascade of loosened snow buried the haggard upturned face. A last desperate effort, a choking cry, and the patch of gurgling black water, glittering to the white moon, resumed its even flow. Nearby crouched the train dogs—waiting; in warm teepee a mile away, busy hands stirred bubbling kettle—waiting. On the spotless snow lay the distorted form of a silver fox. Once more the business of a frozen world moved stiffly, inexorably on.

* * * *

Deepened the winter snows, deepened the winding trails. As best she could, Rose Marie took up the double duty of trap-line and of teepee. There was water to carry, wood to



"In the friendly shelter of sturdy spruce stood Pelequin's teepee."

cut and haul, dogs to feed, traps to visit. From a lodge pole within the narrow shadowy confines of the smoky teepee she hung the frozen carcasses of mink or fox or otter and with keen bladed knife slit forelegs from knee down, hindlegs the full length. Then, nicking and pulling, with the utmost skill and patience, the pelt was gradually rolled back, twisted lightly about the base of the tail, and with a strong sure pull finally freed from the ghastly dripping body. Tanning of other skins might be deferred for a time, but the silver fox, pathetic memento of a man's toil-bitten life, she dressed and tanned with loving care.

January had merged into February, February into March; already early signs of spring began to appear. Once more the wheel had passed dead centre. Once more life in myriad forms was commencing the age-old struggle to again renew itself, in snug bear den and sinuous fox burrow, in otter's damp nest, in cunningly contrived beaver lodge—and in a smoke-stained teepee beside a noisy rapid. Methodically Rose Marie set about her simple preparations. Wood and birch bark for her tiny fire were gathered, a little store of food prepared, buckets and pails kept filled with water.

Came a day when no hooded figure emerged from the shelter among the snow-burdened spruce. While subdued rattle of chains told of train dogs stirring uneasily in snowy burrows, while the quavering cry of timber wolves rose and fell on the night wind, while masses of snow, dislodged from bending boughs overhead, thudded softly on sloping teepee walls, near the headwaters of Cree river a man-child was born. Once more in the empty woods and white wastes of the North, Life had triumphantly scorned killing cold and hungry days. Among the soft silky folds of the skin of a silver fox Rose Marie laid the tiny form.

* * * *

Once again summer was at hand. The highways of the North, released from the stern bondage of snow and ice, and flashing in the sun, joyfully sang on their way to the great northern sea. Almost overnight hill and valley had donned their shimmering mantle of green. Once more the peace of God reigned over trap-line and beaver pond, over the haunts and feeding grounds of moose and caribou.

Once more winging out of the far-away South, marshalled hosts of grey geese sent down glad triumphant calls. Once more out of the misty North fur argosies were making their way by lake and stream.

In these one moved somewhat slowly. In the stern sat a woman dressed in man's garb. Among neatly packed bales,



cooking pots and camp gear, lay a lusty infant, tethered to a thwart by a buckskin thong. Splashing through the shallows, scrambling among overhanging willows and alders, ran the yelping dogs. Across the little bay, past the familiar leaning net stakes and to the sandy shore, moved the canoe. Rose Marie had come home.

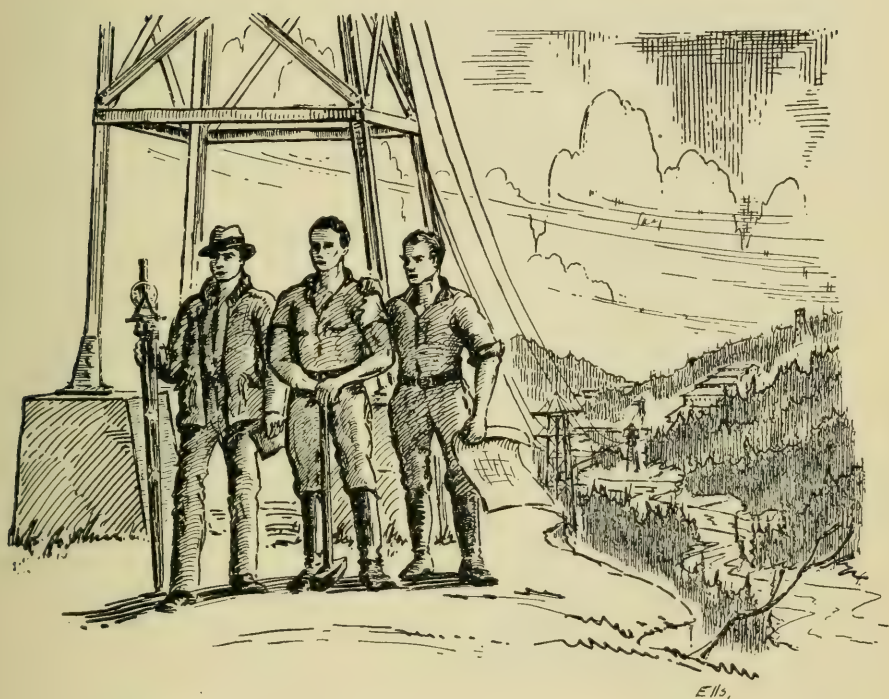
At the "Fort" she bought flour and lard and other necessities with her winter's catch. But with a prime silver fox which she had, she bought bits of bright ribbon and strange little garments.

* * * *

. . . In the warmth and luxury of softly shaded salon a lady absentmindedly stroked with daintily gloved fingers the shimmering fur of a silver fox, returned it to the sensitive and caressing hands of the saleswoman, drew embossed cheque book from monogrammed hand-bag. Thoughtlessly she filled in the pink slip; a uniformed attendant swung open a heavily grilled door. A subdued scent of violets filled the cosy interior of the gleaming car that moved from the curb and purred resistlessly through the driving snow . . .

The Seekers

(Dedicated to the Canadian Prospector)



Although its effects may be checked or diverted, the law of heredity is as inexorable as the law of cause and effect. Urged on by an age-old instinct—commonly misinterpreted as a mere love of gain—men are today pushing further and further into the northern wilderness in search of new "Eldorados". These men are the spiritual descendants of the restless adventurers of untold past generations, brothers of research workers and of seekers in every form of human endeavor, and sires of an industry on which modern civilization largely depends.

The Seekers

The shepherd turns to uplands broad, the herdsman to the plain,

And lowlands beckon husbandman with lure of yellow grain;
The timbered lands call woodsman to vale and mountain side,
And restless sea draws sailorman as moon draws flooding tide;
But now the rock-ribbed northland—empire of vale and hill—
Echoes the thud of bursting charge, the clink of sledge on drill,

For college don and tenderfoot and seasoned pioneer
Have turned their faces northward—*men of the new frontier!*

Sons of the men whose brutish toil first won the stubborn ore,
On burning plains of Nubia and Ophir's fabled shore,
Sons of the restless men who scorned a life of sheltered ease,
Who bore the flag of Empire over uncharted seas;
Sons of the men whose eager feet sought Jason's fleece of old,
Who ravished lofty galleons of Spaniard's blood-stained gold,
Once more they leave the beaten trails to push the frontier
back.

Men of the northern wilderness—*men of the paddle and pack!*

Brothers of bold explorers scanning horizons' rim,
Brothers of musing dreamers brooding in studies dim,
Brothers of earnest plodders following furrows lone,
Brothers of eager searchers seeking some lost touchstone;
Brothers of lonely watchers scanning the star-filled sky,
Brothers of selfless workers spurred by a purpose high,
Brothers of men who spanned the lands with bands of gleam-
ing rails.

Men of a mighty brotherhood—*men of the northern trails!*

Sires of glowing smelters, sires of throbbing mills,
Sires of lofty sentinel stacks peering above the hills,
Sires of towering headframes etched against northern sky,
Sires of clanging shop and forge, sires of industry;
Sires of myriad happy homes, sires of broad highways,
Sires of humming turbines below the deep forebays;
And countless silent "horses" leaping o'er vale and hill,
Follow the trail of men of the north—*the men of hammer and drill.*

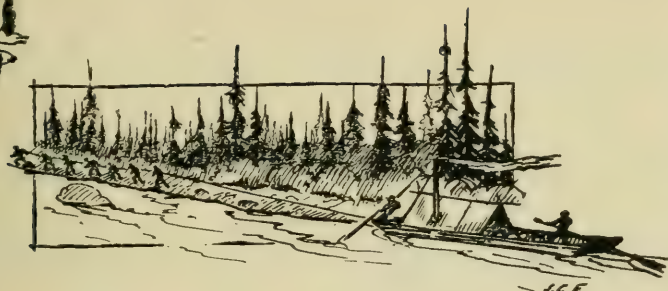
The Athabaska Trail

Prior to the advent of the internal combustion engine along northern rivers, south-bound cargoes of furs were "tracked" upstream by brigades of large canoes and heavy bateaux—sometimes for many hundreds of miles. Crews of men harnessed to heavy "tracking" lines, hundreds of feet in length, fought their way grimly along the shores, often through tangle of overhanging brush, knee deep mud and waist deep water. The ceaseless torture of myriads of flies from daylight till dark, the harassing and heavy work which only the strongest men could long endure, made "tracking" one of the most brutal forms of labor.

In the late fall of 1913 the writer and a crew of Breeds and Indians tracked the first important shipment of bituminous sand from McMurray up the rapids and fast water of Athabaska river to Athabaska Landing, a distance of nearly 250 miles. For twenty-three days, from daylight till dark, in snow and rain, the heavily loaded scow was hauled upstream. The following lines reflect, in part, the mental reaction—a longing for rest—and warmth—and shelter.



Ells



The Athabaska Trail

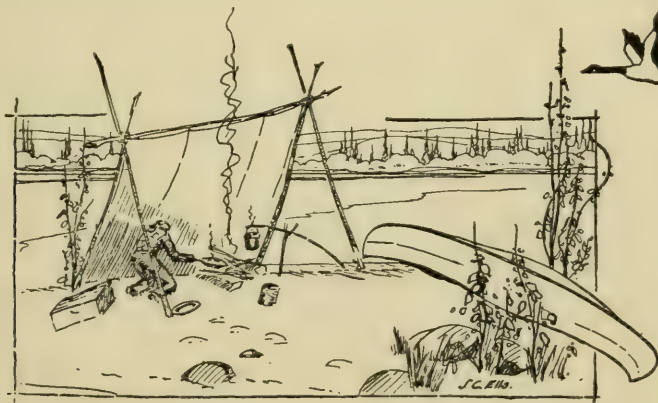


There many a trail winds away to the north-
ward,—
Through swamp and muskeg and bottom land
wide,—
But the trail that once carried the wealth of
the northland
Was the tracker's trail by the river side.

Gone are the trackers, coiled are the track-lines,
But still, of a night, as the mist settles down,
I see that long trail winding down to the northland,
And call back the past,—and the men who are gone.

* * * *

Drip, drip, and patter, patter,
The yellow leaves fall clumsily down,
Drip, drip, and patter, patter,
Yellow leaves,—and gold,—and brown;
For the high bush berries are crimson now
And the low bush berries are done;
Sodden and yellow the wild hay droops,
The days of summer are gone.



Drip, drip and patter, patter, the leaves fall clumsily down,
And the willows droop by the river—for the days of summer
are gone,
Silent and swift steals the river away, with the woodlands
tarnished gold,
For the autumn days are numbered—and the wind is raw and
cold.
The morning air is cold and chill, before the rising of the sun,
Through swinging curtains of the mist, the men come toiling,
one by one.

Like silent legions of the north, the endless spruce march by,
Their inky silhouettes clear cut against the evening sky;
Their heads adorned with golden wreaths, like graceful
maidens tall,
The silver stems of poplar gleam, when shades of evening fall.
Drearily falls the autumn rain, the wind is raw and cold,
Wearily wings the grey goose south,—the year is growing old.

* * * *

Drip, drip and patter, patter, and it's chill in the early morn,
The tracking line grows heavy.—while men trudge wearily on,
Wet with the dew at night and morn, but with sweat in the
noonday sun,
Oh! there's warmth,—and rest,—and shelter,—when the last
day's work is done!



In 1927 at McMurray, Alberta, the writer met two elderly married folk,—a white trapper and a native woman. Reminiscences recalled during an evening spent in their humble cabin, supplemented by information obtained elsewhere, forms the basis of "Squawman".

Squawman

Checked by half a mile of squealing brakes, the long heavy train came to a jarring, grinding stop. As Walter Johnson climbed stiffly down from the grimy day coach that terminated the seemingly endless string of box cars, he stepped into the sunshine and bracing morning air of a new world. Thirty-six hours before he had left the crowded pavements of a busy industrial centre hundreds of miles to the south, with its rush and worry; its keen and never ending struggle for existence; its hard mechanized life of ruthless, if veneered competition.

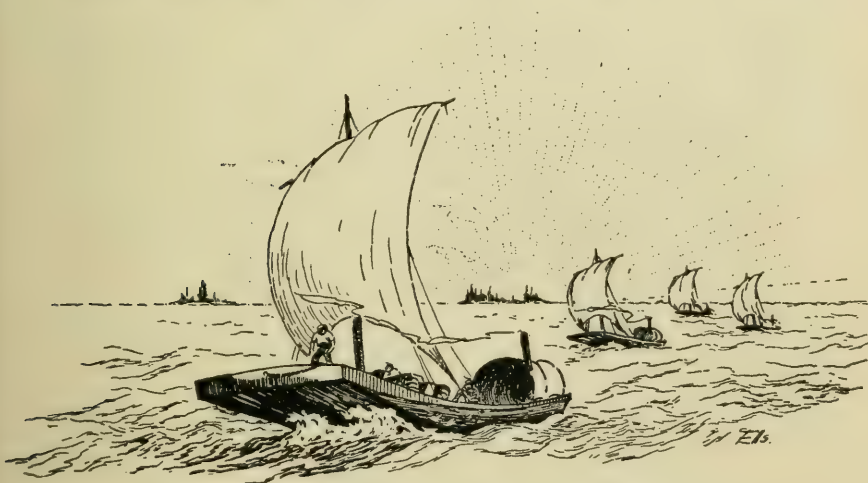
In many ways the long plank platform on which he found himself was an epitome of the life of the north—a stage set in which actors of the great pioneering drama made their bow to new-comers from 'outside'. Later he was to see many another set as, through the crowding years, the curtain rose and fell and rose again on other acts and other scenes of far-flung northern stage. Fresh from his first year at the University, and with the prospect of spending the long summer vacation as deck hand on one of the river boats, the picture that now lay before him was one of engrossing interest, for, at the northern terminus, the periodical arrival of the train was one of the high lights of the week. On that day, for a short time, the life of the settlement was focussed on that rough plank platform. Fur traders and trappers—whites and natives—in fringed buckskin or ragged overalls, gaily shawled native women, moccasin shod and with brown papooses peering over their shoulders, steamboat men, scow-hands and fishermen, mounted police in scarlet tunics. Eloquent too was the impedimenta that everywhere littered the platform—travel stained luggage of trail and waterway, shiny conventional bags and trunks of new comers. Aristocratic club bags plastered with bright labels of caravanseries of half a dozen countries lay heaped together with pack-sacks and kit-bags bearing the unmistakable hall-mark of northern service; bundles of traps whose rusted jaws had gripped and held glossy fur-bearers along a thousand miles of trap line; rifles that had waked the echoes of the wilderness up and down the high latitudes. Such gear spoke a language more eloquent than words, hinted at tales never to be recorded.

But gradually the bustle and excitement of the hour died away; the business of life reasserted itself. The picturesque gathering dispersed to teepee and cabin, to canoe, to scow, to river steamer. Johnson found himself alone on the deserted platform—but the glamor lingered. Was it the slumbering spirit of some remote ancestor who had sailed with Raleigh or Drake or Morgan that was about to re-awaken amid twentieth

century surroundings? Beyond the tiny clearance about the little red station and railway water-tank, the right-of-way ended abruptly against the dark wall of the forest. Through leafy branches the broad river appeared, winding away—to to the north. Beyond the river, timbered slopes climbed to distant horizons, etched against deep blue sky and fleecy cloud. Wild geese—sky-wanderers flying north to freedom and safety, and calling faintly from the blue, passed overhead. For Johnson the Fates were busily planning the pattern for the coming years—a pattern bizarre and fantastic. With compressed lips he nodded his head, slowly and deliberately. Slowly and deliberately he stooped and swung up his pack. No longer did he feel alone—a stranger, and in that moment he knew that he would never rejoin his sophomore class. The North was beckoning and Youth was heeding the summons—gladly. But it was not a decision of the moment; it was a decision that, subconsciously, had been developing through many months.

* * * *

The long northern twilight of summer was done. The early darkness of short September days blotted out the great river rolling tirelessly toward the north. Like a gigantic fan, northern lights softly swung billows of gorgeous color across the northern sky. The sharp sting of frost was in the air. And well within the Arctic circle, a brigade of scows, battered and travel worn, swept silently down stream. From the black shadows along distant shores, frowning cliffs of the mighty Ramparts rose sheer from the waters edge, while beyond, forest clad foot-hills humped sombre backs against



"They had skillfully guided their unwieldy craft across great lakes"

the sky. For many weeks in fair weather and in foul, the hardy crews with great clumsy sweeps or bellying sails, had skilfully guided their unwieldy craft down sand-bar strewn rivers and across great lakes. Through strenuous days they had dragged the heavy boats and carried their precious cargoes across rough portages. Now the far northern Trading Post that was their goal was drawing near, and a new spirit took possession of breed and indian voyageur. Gay shirts and gaudy scarves, handsome moccasins and bright sashes, broad brimmed hats of which the cost represented half a month's wages, were overhauled and kept in readiness. For at long last the men were coming home—home to the land they knew and loved.

In the darkness of the foredeck of the leading scow, Johnston stood alone. Bronzed and bearded, throbbing with vitality, intensely receptive, his faculties keenly alert, in that hour he greedily drank in the spirit of the North, a spirit that in the days to come was to become the very essence of his being. For the first time since leaving the end-of-steel, now so far to the south as to seem almost of another world, he felt a stab of loneliness. Already he had mastered sufficient of his companions' language to follow the drift of their talk, the substance of their songs. And they spoke and sang of Wasaya¹ and Keejigo², of Nisakt³ and Pemasang⁴, of Ank-wood⁵ and Abidaska⁶. Hovering between the fast fading past and the unknown future, he felt he had no home.

On a nearby scow, a breed fiddler broke into the immortal Red River Jig. Glittering star strewn skies, swinging northern lights, music of lapping waters, mystery of the night, fantastic wonderland! For a moment Johnson recalled the jostling weary crowds, the noise and tawdry lights, the shams and empty futile diversions of the sweltering city. Could it be possible that but four months before, he had felt a twinge of regret at leaving such things? And an inexpressible exaltation, a thrilling sense of new-born freedom stirred in his every fibre. For now he felt that he too, in very truth, was 'coming home'! Moving back to a group of breeds gathered near the stern, he joined as best he could in the rivermen's song.

Far down river appeared a tiny point of light. From the leading scow a wild shout went up, trailing out in the darkness astern as it leaped from boat to boat. An hour later the point of light had become a ruddy glow. At midnight in the lurid light of leaping flames from high piled drift-wood fire, the long overhanging bows grated on the boulder strewn beach. To the throbbing sound of madly beaten tom-tom, the melan-

¹Light; ²Morning Star; ³A portion of the sky; ⁴Shines as she passes; ⁵Cloud; ⁶Sun always shining.

choly howling of great northern dogs leaping at their chains, the excited chatter of many voices, the boatmen sprang ashore, while willing hands made fast the boats. One by one the voyageurs melted into the crowding circle of dusky natives. The long voyage was at an end; the crews had come 'home'. Once more as he curled up in his blankets under the fore deck, even as once before on the plank platform at the end-of-steel, Johnson felt lonely. But this time he exulted in his loneliness. He knew that it would be short-lived. Faster and faster spun the Fates; already the pattern began to appear.

* * * *

The sun was peeping above spruce clad ridges when Johnson hauled a bucket over the side and soused his head in icy water. A chill morning breeze blurred the blue waters of the broad river. Like triremes of old from a page of the Iliad, the scows stood ranged along the shore, the great steering sweeps swinging idly in the eddy that murmured under overhanging sterns. Above and below stretched the boulder strewn beach with its windrows of drift-wood, its pole racks hung with drying fish. Near the edge of the steep bank, teepees and cabins straggled in and out along the fringe of hardy northern spruce; somewhat apart and marked by a tall pole, stood the quarters of the Post trader. A tattered ensign with the letters H.B.C. fluttered from the halyards. In the distance the long dark slopes of valley walls swept to the ragged sky-line. Faint wisps of blue smoke floated from teepee top and cabin chimney; the odor of frying food reminded Johnson that he was ravenously hungry. Slipping into his mackinaw jacket, he climbed the bank and made for the log building that housed the Trading Post. At the open door he was met by that indefinite composite odor of food, merchandise and raw furs that invariably permeates the atmosphere of such places. About the floor, or hanging from moss chinked walls, was every variety of trail gear. On shelves behind the rough counter were canned goods and cheap confectionery, bright silks and cottons, tobacco and ammunition and an array of 'luxuries' such as have an irresistible appeal for primitive peoples. Rafters overhead supported toboggans and dog harness, tracklines and paddles. At a rude desk the trader, Grant Sanderson, was thumbing a dog-eared ledger, but, at the stranger's entrance, he rose with a sigh of obvious relief. Instinctively Johnson was drawn to this powerfully built man of imposing stature, who by his presence completely dominated the low roofed cabin. Sanderson, on his part, was impressed by the bearing of the hardy cleancut youth who stood before him. A few words of introduction, a wave of the hand, and he found himself in the small adjoining dining-room-kitchen where Sanderson's native wife and his daughter Wasaya were preparing breakfast.

* * * *

The weeks that followed were crowded with new sensations. Johnson developed new view points, and modified preconceived ideas. More and more old conventions of other days appeared trivial, and fell away like worn out garments. In the unfettered freedom which he now knew for the first time, and fully attuned to his new surroundings, his receptive mind absorbed and assimilated the beauties of nature, the wonders of the changing seasons. Meanwhile he set himself to master the rudiments of life in the north, to fit himself to take his place on the trap-line, and to become an intimate part of his new environment. And he learned why the word 'divorce' had no place in the native tongue. Cooperation and teamwork, the equal sharing of burdens, equality of contribution and mutual helpfulness was the key-note of life in the teepees, ever strengthening bonds of affection. The men brought in the fish, the women cleaned and smoked them; the men hunted moose, caribou and deer, the women tanned the skins and smoked the meat; the men gathered wood, the women tended the cooking fires. In tepee and snug cabin, evening was for all the time of leisure and diversion. Johnson recalled the women he had known, drifting uselessly and aimlessly from one diversion or excitement to another, while their men grubbed in factory of office, or fought their battles in the "city". More of his prim conventions went by the board.

And through the days and weeks, more and more, thoughts of Wasaya dominated his leisure moments. For him the term "squaw-man" no longer stood as a term of reproach. In cities of the South daughters of the rich were eagerly sought in marriage,—daughters of ruthless freebooters who, posing as "captains of industry", plundered the widows and orphans and littered garages with corpses of their victims; daughters of high placed rogues who rifled the public purse. But here was the daughter of a man who had faced a thousand dangers and difficulties, one whose untarnished honor and physical prowess had become almost a tradition throughout the land where men are estimated at their true worth. Once more Johnson was to flout convention—the convention that frowned openly on polygamy yet tacitly condoned it; the convention that jailed the father of a starving family for the theft of a loaf, and blandly countenanced the theft of millions!

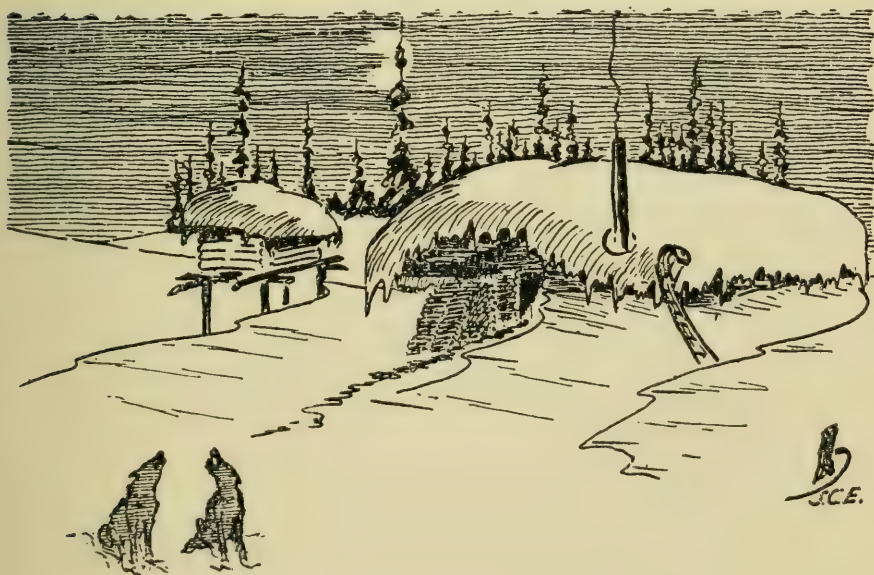
Toward the end of October came Father Lajoie, hurrying by canoe back to his winter mission before freeze-up. And on a crisp cold morning, while the wind whipped his frayed and travel-stained cassock, while strident clangor of wavering wedges of wild geese winging heavily southbound as though fleeing from autumn storms, fell faintly from lowering sky, Wasaya and Johnson knelt in the dried autumn grasses and received the simple benediction. Radiant beauty and youth

and pride of birth; strength and abounding optimism of young manhood! Softly, softly spun the Fates—and the colors were crimson and gold!

* * * *

In a sheltered valley near the southern edge of the barrens, loomed the buried roof of a tiny cabin, dimly outlined against the black background of stunted northern spruce. From beneath heavily shrouded eaves, light gleamed dimly through frost patterned panes. Johnson's second winter on the trap-lines was about to merge into spring.

Inside the cabin a single candle flickered on the rough table. Nearby a kettle bubbled on the little stove. In a corner stood a bunk heaped with soft caribou skins. Rifles and traps hung from pegs driven into the walls. Suspended from roof logs and ranged on hewn shelves, were boxes and bags containing flour and other necessities. Neat cleanliness was the key-note. Within a little circle of light, singing softly, sat Wasaya busily beading moccasins. At the table sat Johnson, his pencil hovering over a grimy sheet of yellow wrapping paper, for, during the long winter evenings he had felt an urge to express in words thoughts born of the wilderness. Not only had he witnessed the moods of nature and the ways of bird and beast—he had absorbed the spirit of the Northland and developed a feeling of kinship with the north and her untamed children.



"In a sheltered valley loomed the buried roof of a tiny cabin"

He had watched the first flakes of approaching winter sift clumsily down from gray lowering skies. In the silence of the night he had listened to the clamor of many voices, as weary flights of geese, reluctant to leave the friendly safety of the north, winging their way unfalteringly through snow and sleet and darkness, sent down a last farewell. Then, as winter's bitter cold with its grim threat of famine gripped the land as in an iron vice, he had watched the fur bearers don their coats of white and merge with the soft snowy blanket that wrapped the northern world.

With nipping cold and hungry days had come the wail of famine—the trail cry of the famished pack as gaunt gray wolves, like soft elusive shadows, loped swiftly and warily over the deep snows of the empty woods. Out on the open barrens he had watched the caribou as they trotted in single file, and had listened in awe as the rallying cry of timber wolves, under the frosty glitter of star filled sky and over the snowy wastes, called the ravening pack to the kill. From the friendly shelter of spruce and pine, while icy arctic blizzards roared through swaying tops, he had seen the swirling clouds of snow turn the land into an endless desolation of white chaos. Then the animals, great and small, sought the shelter of woods and thickets, or snuggled down like drowsy children beneath the great white coverlet. In the deep stillness of calm winter nights, while riotous northern lights vied with the blazing stars, he had listened as forest trees, rent by the deadly bitter frost, snapped like pistol shots.

With the coming of spring the great silence of the North was broken as the geese, driving tirelessly northward, sent down triumphant clarion calls. A thousand nameless lakes and streams were released from winter's bondage. Between boulder-strewn hills, appeared great wet blankets of swamp and muskeg, on which innumerable ponds flashed back the sun. Through the wide spaces, streams wandered lazily like blue and silver ribands, or rushed in foamy rapids over wet black ledges. In sunny hollows, early spring sunshine nursed into life the grasses and flowers of the brief northern summer. In fair weather it was a wonderland of light and shadow and color,—in the dark days a land dreary and forbidding.

And now, in the security of sheltered cabin, Johnson's thoughts were a-roving. Slowly the pencil moved across the dingy yellow paper—

"Oft in the evening I'm smoking my pipe a bit,
Bed is all ready, the fire burning low..."

and as the roaring gale lashed driven sleet against half buried panes—

"Then while I'm wondering what the next day may bring,
Out of the north comes a sound that I know,—
'Tis a song that Keewatin, the North Wind is singing,
All through the willows and tall spruces near,
Sometimes a whisper low, 'times like a bugle blast,
Bringing me visions I'll always hold dear."

Johnson shoved fresh wood into the little stove. Then as the dry resinous pine crackled cheerfully, the pencil moved on.—

"Sometimes a vision of wind driven spaces,
Ice covered rivers and down falling snow,
Lakes gleaming white in the glow of the Northern lights,
Here and there trails—where the dog teams go."

Out of the shadows arose visions of the tiny settlement clustering about the northern Trading Post.—

"A cluster of cabins with smoke slow uprising,
Faint beat of tom-tom, a shuffle of feet,
Jingle of dog bells as some late arrival,
Passes the lobstick—and drives up the street."

The writer closed his eyes, and now in fancy he was once more floating down the mighty river with breed and Indian voyageur—

"Or it may chance comes a summertime picture,
Scows drifting down on the broad river's breast,
Crews working hard as they shoot through the rapids,
Soon in still waters they'll all take a rest.
Canoe on the beach, log cabin beyond it,
Bear in a berry-patch, head swinging low,
Moose at the river's bend, visions without an end
Come—as I drowse in the firelight's glow"

He laid the paper gently on Wasaya's knee with—"Pretty rotten I know, but, well it's a beginning". But as she read the simple lines on her dear home land, her eyes filled with tears. Johnson knew that at least the words rang true.

* * * *

Twice again smoking storms of the long winters had swept over the frozen waves of the desolate barrens; twice again summer sun and whispering winds had carpeted the north with riotous colors. Through his catches of white foxes Johnson had become known as the "lucky trapper", though few realized how much of the "luck" was due to Wasaya. On the froathy crest of a bull market in the world "outside" the price of furs had risen to fabulous prices and trappers were reaping a rich reward. Meanwhile, in the relative leisure of long summer days and the quiet of long winter evenings, Johnson's pencil had been busy. His initial

attempts, faltering and hesitant, had developed into greater and greater assurance—a nice sense of word values. Finally after repeated disappointments, the infrequent mail brought acceptance of verse and prose; eventually came requests for more.

And with these there came also a new longing—a longing to visit once more the great "outside". A request from a publisher in New York that he should submit a short novel proved to be the deciding factor. For weeks Johnson kept the decision from Wasaya, instinctively dreading an outburst of protest. To his surprise she heard him calmly and at once set about with helpful preparations for the long journey. But he did not know of her bitter anguish when, alone far up the mountain side, in an abandonment of despair, she threw herself on her face in the friendly mosses, sobbing out her heartbreak. Sanderson heard the news—gravely. He had known of others who had gone south—others who had not returned. Early in September, the last south-bound steamer paused on its way up river. Long after the gangway had been hauled aboard and the great paddles were tirelessly, relentlessly driving the ship further and further south, Wasaya stood alone on the bleak boulder-strewn beach, waving, waving. Then something within her seemed to break. Slowly, heavily and with dragging steps she climbed the river bank to her cabin—and closed the door. Sanderson bowed his head. Slowly, slowly, spun the Fates—as though fearful of marring the web.

* * * *

Four weeks later Johnson reached the end-of-steel; another week and he was in New York. He had planned to remain but a few days and then make his way north from end-of-steel by dog-train on the first ice, but when he interviewed his prospective publisher delays developed. Meanwhile he had opportunity to look about, and from east to west and from north to south he wandered over the Island. As in the north he found everywhere the same never ending struggle for existence. But in the one case the struggle was almost in the nature of a sporting contest with the denisons of the wild—the Wood Folk—and with the elements, a struggle in which clear-cut issues were decided by manly strength and courage. On the island of Manhattan the issues were devious and to a large extent decided by trickery and cunning, intensified year by year as competition and rivalry increased. In the one case the cards were fairly played and the best man won. In the other, decisions rested on vastly complex conditions over which any one individual had but little control. In the one case strong and reliant individuality was developed; in the other mob psychology became increasingly dominant. On the one hand, a common cause, mutual respect and helpful

cooperation leavened society and the fittest survived; on the other hand was bitter and relentless competition in which the best types often went to the wall. In the one case society was homogenous and free from sharp cleavages; in the other, parasitic and marked by sharply defined strata. It was an environment, man made and artificial, where mechanical routine replaced freedom and independence of action; an environment in which, by night, garish illumination replaced brilliant star-shine and the soft northern lights; in which tiresome and crowded foot-ways replaced the solitude of softly carpeted trails; in which polluted snow, churned by myriad wheels, replaced the unstained virgin blanket of white; in which roaring thoroughfares walled in by echoing brick and stone replaced the highways of majestic rivers; in which the din of traffic, below, above and on every hand, contrasted harshly with the subdued sounds of the wilderness. Yet Johnson was keenly conscious of the appealing lure of a great city. In the north one walked openly and was observed by all; here, engulfed among teeming millions, restraint could be cast aside. Inevitably one looked about for adventure.

Struggling in the seething cross-currents of the city's life, was a host of writers and artists whose right to live was dictated by the moods of the crowd. A few bravely maintained their independence of thought at any cost; the majority perforce became cynically subservient to the whims of their masters. On the fringe of these was still a third group of young men and women—the dilettantes and poseurs, certain of whom maintained expensive studio suites, wrote their own doubtful code of morals, and aped the ways of the craft. Unversed in the life which centres about Washington Square, Johnson found himself drawn to the latter group. A luncheon with one of its young women at one of the so-called Bohemian clubs, marked a turning point in his career—a turning point which was to brand him false to Wasaya, to himself, and to the code of the north. Grimly, grimly spun the Fates—and the pattern was sordid and drab.

* * * *

Weeks had lengthened into months; for Johnson, memories of the north and all that it had once stood for, had receded further and further into the dim background, blurred by the purple haze of a new and fascinating existence. Although he occasionally prostituted his genius by dashing off flamboyant, distorted tales of a fictitious northern life, the flame of a once high ambition flickered and sank—lower and lower. Letters to Wasaya became fewer and fewer—finally ceased. Under the impetus of a stock market, recklessly pushed to fantastic heights, the tempo of pre-prohibition life in the metropolis became faster and faster—a feverish orgy of money getting and money spending. With a host of others Johnson and his

paramour were swept heedlessly along on the crest of the glittering wave.

One of their immediate circle had sold an impossible picture at an impossible price to one of the mushroom crop of impossible new rich. The event was being duly celebrated by a masquerade at one of the studios in a manner crudely reminiscent of the Quartier Latin—at its worst. Every advantage, every liberty and licence had been taken in the selection and preparation of make-up and of the scanty costumes worn. Johnson, his once buoyant spirits dulled by months of dissipation, had come somewhat late—under protest. Accustomed as he was to the boasted 'new freedom' of his circle of friends, he was unprepared for the scene which met his eye. Egyptian goddesses and ladies of the harem, dusky belles from the South Seas and ladies of the ballet, were crowded together with the more conventionally costumed men. On a long table, centered by a massive punch bowl, was a seemingly inexhaustible array of wines and liquors.

When he arrived, garbed in velvet and lace, the celebration was rapidly reaching a climax, and he joined somewhat half-heartedly in the boisterous hilarity. For, as yet unknown to him, the spell of the city was weakening; at long last reaction was at hand. It came unexpectedly. As his gaze wandered over the crowd, a belated girl paused in the doorway. She was clad in the buckskin trappings of the north, the fur-trimmed hood of heavily-fringed parka framing a beautiful face. Buckskin and fur were sprinkled with sparkling artificial snow, and from head to foot her costume was faultlessly complete in all its detail. It was a costume which, in other days, he had associated with but one other—Wasaya. Involuntarily he took a step forward; then drew back to the disordered table with its litter of glasses. His eyes still fastened on the hooded figure, he climbed upon a chair. Gradually the babble of voices was hushed; their "man of mystery" their "wild man of the north" was about to speak. Slowly, quietly, he began. "You have gathered together to-night as impersonators of many characters—some worthy, others unworthy—but there is one amongst you whom I think you have not recognized. Long ago he was guilty of the Great Betrayal, and down through the centuries in every guise and in every walk of life, he has perpetrated his infamy in many forms. Through him countless hopes and ambitions have been blasted, thrones toppled in the dust, and, basest of all, trusting hearts broken. To-night that man, that outcast whose trail has left its slime in the hovels and in the palaces of every land, stands before you". He paused; his chin sank among the laces at his throat, his voice dropped almost to a whisper as he muttered brokenly, "And his name is Judas".

Again he paused but it seemed as though a crushing weight had been lifted from his shoulders. As his eyes met those of the

parka hooded figure, he concluded, "Many months ago I came among you with an ambition to inscribe a name on the literature of your city. I now leave you with a far greater ambition—the ambition to erase a name".

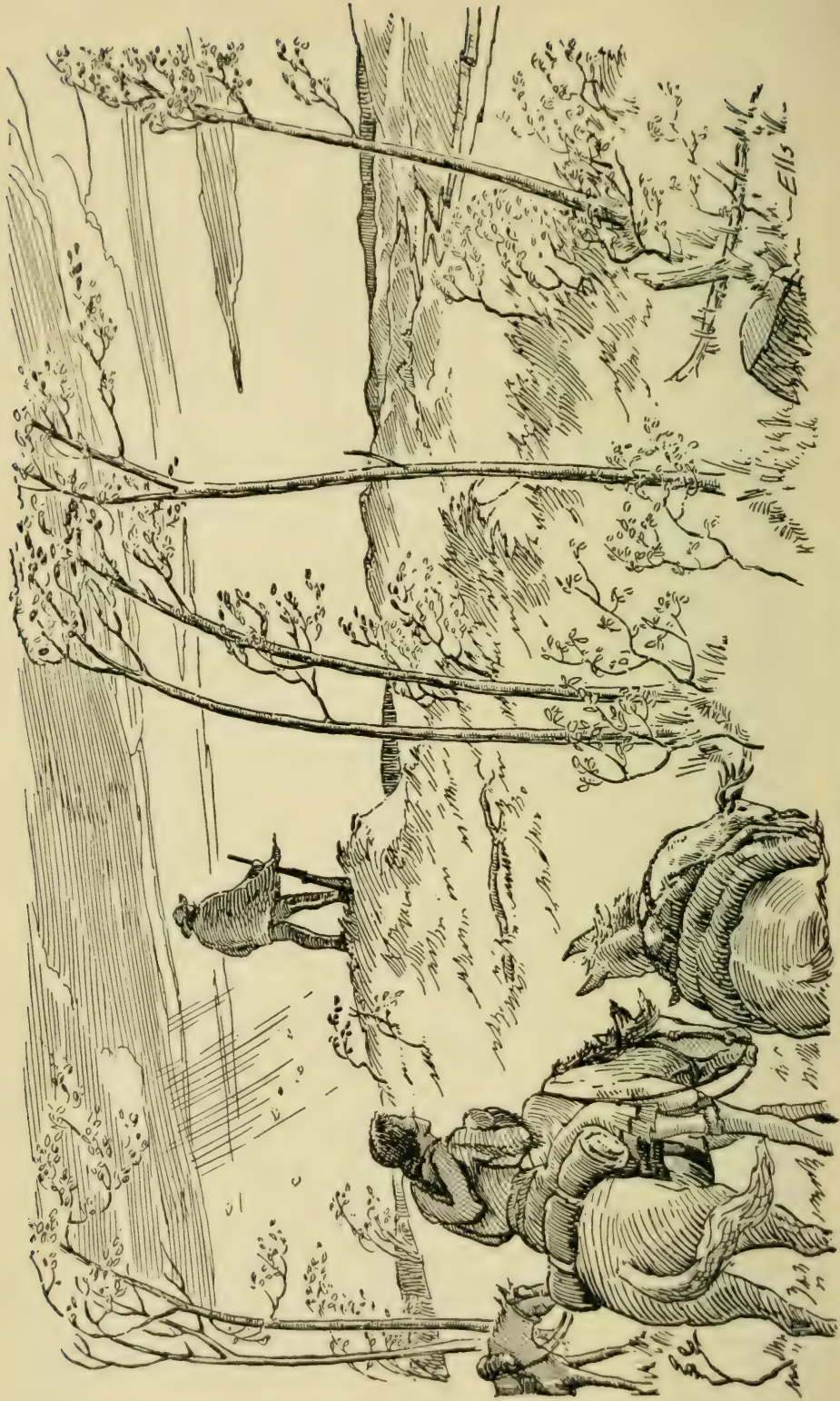
In the early morning hours as grey dawn was filtering down the long dim isles of the city's streets, a man, fantastically garbed, entered a telegraph office. He had a bunch of lace at his throat. His face was drawn and haggard but his head was erect, his step firm. Without hesitation he scribbled a message to a remote station in the Canadian northland and handed it to the operator. "I am coming home, I am coming home". The operator glanced at the message, at the writer—and turned to his noisy key.

* * * *

Before the white-washed log Trading Post, in the sweltering heat of the long northern summer day, a little knot of rivermen and trappers sat on the edge of the dilapidated plank walk that was the pride of the straggling settlement. A few hundred feet of rutted roadway wandered across the river bottom lands that bordered the swift flowing river. The dark wall of the forest crowded in behind the scattered group of log cabins and smoke stained canvas tepees. From the dust of the road, great gaunt hungry sleigh dogs, released for a little from stinging lash and winding winter trails, lifted their heads languidly to snap hopelessly at clouds of tormenting flies—and again relapsed into the dust. A young man, newly arrived from "outside", and clad in neat khaki, dropped down beside the group of loungers, attempted to revive the flagging conversation, relapsed into silence.

Presently from the direction of the river two figures appeared—a man and a woman. Both were bent by toil and years, yet each walked with dignity which struck one strangely. The woman had once been beautiful. A wet gunny sack suspended across the man's shoulders obviously contained fish. The woman carried canoe paddles and fishing gear. On reaching the ditch which bordered the road, the man paused and carefully assisted his companion across. Then in the glaring sunshine they plodded away, little puffs of white dust marking the tread of moccasined feet. "Odd pair—that" commented one of the older trappers in a low voice—"Feller called Johnson and his woman.—daughter of old Grant Saunderson and one of the best she-trappers in the north. Seems that Johnson met her way down at Arctic Red river years ago. Left her for a bit, they say, but finally drifted back here again. Claim they're the happiest pair of people north of end-of-steel."

Little by little I learned the story of Wasaya, and of Johnson—squawman. The Fates had spun better than they knew.



"Eager to sow where others had not sown."

Ellis

The Pioneers

Today Canada calls for men and women of fortitude and courage to open up our New North. It is indeed fortunate that the spirit of those who wrote the mighty epic of pioneering in Canada during "covered wagon days" of the 18th and 19th centuries, still marches on.

* * * *

Contemptuous of a cloistered sheltered life,
Scorning calm sequence of the pallid days,
Weary of smug convention, petty strife,
They spurned the tedium of the trodden ways;
Eager to blaze new trails through lands unknown,
To trace new trails across the foaming sea,
Eager to sow where others had not sown,
Eager to challenge unknown Destiny!

Beyond the weary wastes of tossing sea,
At darkling eve and at the rosy dawn,
They saw a vision of the things to be,
A Grail that led them ever on . . . and on;
Above the sobbing cry of Autumn gale,
Through spume of Winter's storm, through doubts
and fears,
From wind-swept empty waste and lonely vale,
'Rose muted symphony of Pioneers!

From loom of marching years fell warp and woof,
Flecked with the simple joys and sorrows shared
By flickering bivouac fire, 'neath humble roof,
Pageant of lives of dauntless men . . . who dared!
Their creaking covered wagons lurch no more,
Gone bloody forays, frontier stockades gone . . .
But still by nameless stream and windy shore,
Through the New North their souls go marching on!

The Siren



Mythology reminds us of fair Sirens whose bewitching voices lured ancient mariners to destruction. About their feet lay the bleached bones of brave men and stout ships.

Even as of old, sinister Sirens still sing their alluring songs. But one—the Siren NATURE—lures men back to the freedom and true contentment of the Canadian Northland. In a word, the "Lure of the North" is merely the lute of living close to Nature.

The Siren

A Siren sings where lonely lands slope down toward northern
seas,
Her voice rides down the whistling gale . . . and floats on
drowsy breeze;
"Lure of the North" men name her; calling her children home,
Her song stirs yearning hearts of men . . . "Come to me,
come to me, come!"

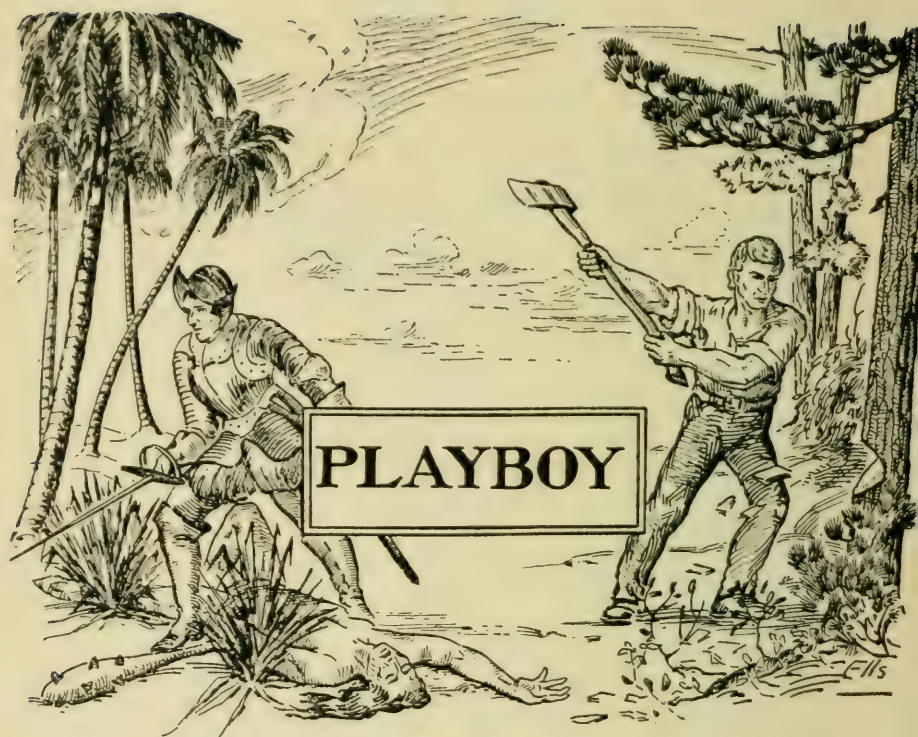
* * * *

Her voice is Northland's symphony of woodland, lake and
plain,
Drowsy hum of summer wind . . . , patter of gentle rain,
Dainty notes of babbling brook . . . and crash of thudding
fall,
Mysterious cry of "Wood-folk" . . . and loons' sad wavering
call;
Leaves rustling in the moonlight . . . geese gabbling on the
bars . . .
And booming call of lonely owl, under the glittering stars,
Till over weary wastes of white the hosts of Winter brood
And to a silent sleeping world . . . comes hush of interlude!

She calls her sons to forest isles where silent shadows sleep,
To white-laced foaming rapids . . . where yeasty waters leap,
To silent pools where beaver splash, to misty purple hills,
To fairy dells where shadows deep fleck tiny tinkling rills;
Through gently swaying tufted boughs etched against star-
filled sky,
In sighing winds at even tide she croons a lullaby,
While storm's grim pomp and circumstance sweeps through
the shuddering night,
She gives men true contentment by snapping camp-fire bright.

* * * *

A Siren sings where lonely lands slope down toward northern
seas,
Her voice rides down the whistling gale . . . or floats on drowsy
breeze,
Compelling, wise, inscrutable, from age to age the same . . .
"Lure of the North" men call her—but "NATURE" is her
name.



Playboy

In the perpetual summer of southern California, drowsing in the shade of luxuriant semi-tropical foliage, the little town of Santa Anna peeps sleepily out over the broad Pacific. Always there is the music of the ocean along the wide sweep of sandy beach and rocky headland. Inland, mile on mile, vineyard and orchard chequer the level plain—a sea of green, spangled with fruit and flowers. Beyond, sunny foothills slowly climb toward cloud-topped ranges where the Sierras shut out the eastern sky. By day a world of sunshine and color; under the soft stars a world of fragrance, of mystery, of romance! When the great ferns and filmy pepper trees cast lace-like shadows across the moonlit sward, when the foliage of stately palms softly rustles in the evening breeze and tall eucalyptus, like lofty sentinels, stand black against the sky, ghosts of the past steal down from purple range and up from watery plain. Then, from a misty background of blood and gold, that shrouds an Eldorado of an age-long past, emerge dusky Indian hunters and black-robed Jesuits, brown Franciscans and helmed Spanish conquerors; then red-handed buccaneers and ruthless freebooters in high-pooped phantom caravels, glide over a moonlit sea of polished silver. Ever the oppressed and the oppressor, ever the hunted and the hunter! In fancy one almost hears the choking cry of despair, the fierce shout of triumph.

Such were the surroundings in which John Appleby—descendant of conquering gold-seeker and ravishing Spaniard—grew to young manhood. In him the bold courage, the love of adventure, the will to win of the Nordic race was tempered by the imagination and impulsiveness of Mediterranean people. And now, after long years, the descendant of men whose swords had uprooted ancient civilizations, of hard-bitten Indian fighters, of stern conquerors of the wilderness, had won in this land of *dolce far niente* a title strange to the race of his forefathers—the strange title of Playboy. But heredity—legacy of age-old inhibitions—does not fade in a few brief generations. Through the years the old flaming spirit that had ruthlessly driven men across unknown oceans and trackless plains, over snow-blocked divides and grey cactus-strewn deserts, merely slumbered . . . awaiting the call.

The storm that for days had lashed the coast had blown itself out. Beach and headland were a tumult of tumbling,

crashing waters. Thrilled and exalted by the strife of elemental forces, moved by a vague unrest, challenged by he knew not what, young Appleby strode over the wind-swept dunes. Hand in hand a party of his young friends, shoreward bound in gay bathing costumes, raced by with cries of "Come along, Playboy!" and somehow for the first time the name had an unwelcome sound—somehow, resentment began to crystallize. For new forces were stirring within him, far away voices were faintly calling, dim fingers were beckoning . . . were beckoning, away, away! For a few brief generations his fathers had lingered—exiles from the northland, under a southern sun—but what are a few brief generations when a thousand centuries crowd behind? And now, at last, true son of the northern race, glorying in his untried youth, he felt an irresistible urge to match his young strength against the forces of nature, to take the sporting chance which those before him had taken—to blaze new trails! With a new interest almost akin to contempt, he watched the distant figures of his friends as they flung themselves into onrushing breakers. Slaves of convention, for a little they would follow the same old paths, play with the same old toys, and finally, the little circuit of their lives completed, would come to the same old conventional end. And their children and their children's children . . . With a new determination, Playboy turned back from the windy shore.

* * * *

It was amid the busy confusion at the northern terminus of a newly graded railway that Playboy made his first acquaintance with Canada's New North. Two thousand miles to the south—or was it on some distant planet?—he had left the pleasantly ordered life he had always known—a life in which sunny day merely followed . . . sunny day; in which conventional adventures of velvet nights merely followed an established routine. But at the end of steel, where he now found himself, conditions were primitive, glaringly crude. Within a small area hemmed in by virgin forest, were log cabins chinked with mud, low unpainted buildings of rough green lumber. Actors in the drama—rough-looking overall-clad men and sturdy high-booted women—were in keeping with the strange setting. Some there were who would remain at this "advance base" and consolidate conquests already won; for others the long, long trail had but begun. And indeed the scene was reminiscent of some supply base back of a battle-front. Miniature mountains of all sorts of material were constantly rising, constantly melting away—aromatic piles of newly sawn lumber and of wire fencing, farm implements and baled hay, barrels, crates and cases of merchandise. All through the day and far into the long northern twilight, a seemingly endless procession of ponderous ox- and horse-drawn wagons, heavily loaded, lurched clumsily over the

roots and among the stumps of the deeply rutted track that wound away . . . to the North.

Always the topics that dominated the talk of leisure moments were food . . . and "down North." In a little world of strenuous activity, peopled by an out-of-door folk bound together by a spirit of mutual helpfulness, united in the pursuit of common interests and a common cause, petty trivialities of convention were submerged in a common task—the task of subduing a new land. And with the passing days, more and more, Playboy became inoculated with the contagious spirit of this new frontier. With growing interest he listened to tales of that great northern wilderness of far



"Ponderous wagons lurched clumsily over the roots and among the stumps."

horizons that ended only along the bleak, inhospitable coast of an ice-strewn arctic sea. A land fresh from the hand of nature, it was marked by no great monuments of vanished civilizations. Instead of mighty epics of conquering armies and devastated cities, quaint Indian legends constituted the sole link with a dim and distant past. It was a land where waterways were the sole highways, where the Athabaska and Mackenzie rivers constituted the great travel route, the line of communication with the outside world. For as yet the drone of planes had not broken the long silence, nor magic waves from snapping wireless leaped across its uncharted wilds.

Inevitably came the day when Playboy crammed his now meagre belongings into a stout bag and climbed the great muddy wheel of a cumbersome freighter. Day after day he had watched the wagons rear their bulk against the sky line and disappear over a distant fire-swept ridge. Now he would see for himself what lay beyond. For we are all children—peeping eagerly through strange doors and windows. Playboy had opened a new door. Unknown to himself, he was about to slam it shut behind him.

Four days later the great valley of the Athabaska yawned ahead. At the top of the long descent that wound down to the river, he leaped from his precarious seat and, as the line of creaking wagons rolled past, gazed for the first time over the illimitable northland. Already there was a touch of fall in the air and tree-clad slopes were a blaze of autumn color. Here and there between folds in the hills, loops of the broad, swift flowing river appeared. Far to the north lay the level sky line. But far horizons do not check—they merely stimulate eager imagination. Though his eyes were fixed on the distant scene, in fancy Playboy was already far, far beyond, traversing lakes and inland seas, descending turbulent rivers, toiling across nameless hills and valleys. And as he gazed there swept over him a new resolve and a new purpose—to break the circle of narrow convention, to escape from the artificial restrictions that until now had prescribed the little orbit of his life, to peer beyond the horizon. He had already crossed a divide where waters flowed to the south and to the north. When finally he turned back to the rough wagon track, he knew that he had also crossed another divide, beyond which lay the ordered existence he had always known. And he knew also that, whatever the future might hold in store, whatever of disillusionment, privation and hardship it might bring, he would never forget that purple hour alone on the brink of the Athabaska valley. Meanwhile, he rejoiced “as a strong man to a race.”

An hour later, with swinging stride, Playboy entered the little settlement of Athabaska. Although the valley was already filled with shadow, the river front was a scene of busy activity. Along the shore a row of great clumsy scows lay moored, their cargoes sheeted over with heavy canvas covers. On the bank above, to the sound of saws and ringing hammers, other boats were rapidly being made ready. Here and there under huge black kettles of bubbling pitch, fires glowed in the gathering dusk. The season of open water was drawing to a close. Everywhere lounged native boatmen in gaudy picturesque costumes. From a nearby saloon came the sound of a fiddle—the clamor of carefree voices. Tomorrow, pilots and crews would bid farewell; one by one the scows of the brigade would vanish around the river bend; one by one they would take the long wet trail . . . “down north!”

* * * *

Where the brawling waters of Rat River join the majestic Peel, an irregular line of whitewashed log buildings and dingy smoke-stained canvas teepees straggled along the edge of the low mud bank. Somewhat apart, a flag fluttering lazily from a tall spruce pole marked the site of the Trading Post. Like some sombre drop-scene, the thin fringe of northern spruces crowded in above, behind, and below. For two days, by trail and canoe—for the “moccasin telegram” had travelled far and fast—trappers, whites and natives, with their inevitable retinues of lean and hungry dogs, had been coming in from east and west, from north and south. Now, in and out of cabin and teepee, they eddied—noisily happy. Obviously an event of more than usual importance was about to take place. Men in colorful shirts and fringed buckskin, released for a little from the oppression of solitude and silence of distant lake or lonely woodland stream, discussed their affairs in the jargon of trail and trap-line. But the attention of the women was centered on Abidaska*. Gaily dressed in the cheap “trade” finery for which they had bartered rich glossy pelts of fox and otter, of beaver and marten, they crowded about this dusky daughter of the northern wilderness even as their sisters of the far-away south might surround some “pale face” beauty in the soft luxury of sheltered city home. For today Abidaska was to wed the man of her choice—one whom they knew by the strange name of Playboy.

Suddenly a shout went up from a group of men as a lone canoeman, his paddle flashing in the sun, came into view around the river bend. As his canoe touched the soft shore, a dozen hands dragged it from the water, while the canoeman,

*“Abidaska” is an Ojibwa name meaning “Sun always shining.”

surrounded by a rollicking company, swiftly climbed the bank. But what a change in the Playboy who, six years before, his young face alight with the spirit of adventure, had gazed with eager confidence out over the wide sweep of the ragged northland! In a land where the strong survive and the weak go to the wall, where initiative, strength, and courage are the talismans which spell success, where a man's deeds are his sole press agent, as trapper, trader and riverman, Playboy's name was known wherever flickering camp-fires gleamed all down the Great Waterways to the misty labyrinth of the vast arctic delta. Youthful, immature confidence had given way to assured and well-tried reliance. His boyish figure had developed into a powerful hardened physique. His skin, darkened by sun and wind, his stained buckskin garments those of the northern tribes, only his features belied his race. And now he was about to take the final step of his long initiation—to merge his life, body and soul, with that of a native woman.

A few hours later, as the madly peeling bell of the little Mission Chapel rang out across the wide reaches of the swift-flowing river, Playboy and Abidaska made their solemn vows. Simple the ceremony, and devoid of pomp, wholesome and whole-hearted the festivities which followed. From the corner in the "Big House" of the fur trading company, where ryth-



"Along the shore a row of great clumsy scows lay moored."

mic moccasined feet of generations of fiddlers had worn thin the heavy flooring, came call of fiddle and throbbing drum. And while the midnight sun swung low and once more climbed above the northern wilderness, men and maids, natives and whites all on a common footing—whirled tirelessly through intricate square dance and mazy reel. The sun was again high in the heavens when the weary fiddler lowered his bow for the last time and the dancers scattered to cabin and teepee. Two days later, Playboy and Abidaska, their canoe loaded with gear of trap-line and camp, quietly slipped away in the morning mists and began the long ascent of the turbulent Rat, to the far-away trapping cabin. Along the shore followed their dogs, hunting through overhanging willows and thick undergrowth.

* * * *

Untrammelled primal man, untrammelled primal woman! Inhibitions and conventions of the increasingly complex thing called "civilization" imposed no irritating bonds. Freedom to live the normal lives intended by the Creator was the keynote of the strange honeymoon on which they were now setting out. To the westward the long waterway wound away through an uninhabited hinterland of woodland and plain, of hills and valleys, of nameless rivers and lakes. Summer was before them with its soft blue skies, bright sunny days, and the long cool twilight of the land of the midnight sun. Time meant little—was merely an incident. They might loiter along placid reaches of the stream and portage past tumbling white water at their leisure. Camping places could be chosen when and where their fancy willed. Both were equally versed in the routine of paddle and pole, of trail and camp. Fish and game were abundant, youth and abounding health were theirs. And Playboy was filled with a great exultation as he recalled friends of other days departing on stereotyped honeymoons—rushing on hot dusty trains to the garish glitter of crowded cities, speeding on palatial liners surrounded by every luxury—but ever hemmed in by strange crowds, ever checked by prescribed convention, ever confronted by schedule and time-table.

And in those glorious days, unconsciously each was building for the coming years on that surest of all foundations—the foundation of mutual helpfulness. For from the first hour the sharing of burdens, loyalty to a common purpose, mutual dependence bound them ever more closely as together they faced the wilderness—each utterly confident in the other. And with the passing weeks, Playboy could not fail to contrast his dark-skinned "woman" with many of her "pale face" sisters he had once known. Love and marriage! What did those friends of the past know of its meaning—its possibilities? A brief storm of violent emotion—and then what?

Servitude to a daily task on the part of the men, wearing themselves out body and soul in order to provide worthless unrealities for the women. Rich in their possessions of clothes and jewels, of automobiles and fine homes, these were poor indeed in the most important possession of all—love! Bought and paid for with a ring and with those things that money could buy they merely represented all too often—legalized prostitution. Small wonder that husbands turned to other women—to new faces. Axe in hand, Playboy paused to watch—contentedly—his “woman” as, with a happy smile, she busied herself about the little comforts of the evening camp.

Five weeks later they reached the trapping cabin. For both, those weeks of healthy physical exertion had been but a happy holiday, a smiling portal opening into a new life. Now the routine of the trapper's life was to begin. There were berries to gather, moose meat to smoke or preserve, fish to dry for the long winter months. There were skins to tan and fashion into parkas, gauntlets and moccasins, snowshoes to lace, wood to gather, trap lines to clear. The work of the one fitted into that of the other to form a complete whole. Again Playboy reflected on the separate lives led by husbands and wives he had known in other days—lives united almost wholly by the increasingly tenuous threads of formality and convention.

* * * *

Already the long sunny days of the brief northern summer were gone. For a few short weeks the wilderness had decked itself in subdued autumn colors, while valley slopes had echoed back the bugle call of moose and stag, restless under the hunter's moon. And then had closed in swiftly the long sub-arctic darkness. Almost overnight the land had been wrapped in its soft white mantle, and the music of roaring torrent and murmuring stream hushed by an icy hand. Once more the vast northland lay under the stern thralldom of the northern winter. But in and about a snug cabin near the headwaters of the Rat, lusty young life and sheer joy of living laughed at brutal menace of piercing frost that ever groped with icy fingers over well chinked walls. Day and night from the slender black pipe that rose above the low half-buried roof, like a challenge to the grim hosts of the tyrant winter, there fluttered a pennant of light blue smoke. Meanwhile the routine of living moved smoothly on. Playboy made periodic trips over the long trap line; in the “home” cabin Abidaska dressed and tanned the skins taken from the traps. But when storms roared over the northern wastes a truce reigned along the trap line. Then the wizardry of the radio beguiled the hours, as from far-away studios of five continents came song and story—the march of events in that other and distant world, the great “outside”.

November had merged into December, December into a new year, when toward the end of January Abidaska expressed a desire to visit her parents at the distant "Fort". With fair weather and strong dogs the hundred miles of trail could easily be covered in three days—four at most. A week at the Fort, another four days on the trail . . . with fair weather . . . In frosty starlight Playboy watched the swerving carryall and parka-hooded figure disappear in a swirl of snow as the yelping dogs raced down the winding trail to the frozen river. A week on the trail . . . with fair weather . . . !

But already two weeks had elapsed, the weather had broken. Abidaska had not returned, and vain regrets like some bird of ill omen bowed the shoulders of a panting man who, even then, was fighting his way grimly over the heavily drifted trail. Where the toboggan track dipped steeply down through a wooded ravine, on the second day, his search ended, hope died. At the foot of the slope the overturned carryall was a pitiful heap of wreckage. Helpless in a tangle of stout harness, cowered the famished dogs, whining and trembling with the cold. Close by, thrown almost clear of the carryall, and already wrapped in the soft mantle of drifted snow, lay a motionless figure. The fringed parka hood had been pushed back, exposing a cruel gash across the right temple, and Playboy's trained eye at once envisioned the pathetic tragedy. The dogs racing down the steep slope, the low overhanging bough, the sharp ledge of rock jutting from beneath the snow—all these gave mute though eloquent evidence of the disaster.

The far north is a stern mother who forms the lives and thoughts of her children in strange moulds. Few who pass long periods in the "silent places" escape her influence. A new outlook, new mental characteristics are developed, until many men are described merely as being "bush simple". But to such men great and unexpected mental shock may bring quite unexpected reactions. And to Playboy—physically exhausted and emotionally overwrought—there came strange and distorted thoughts, thoughts born of the life of the wilderness. His beautiful Abidaska was not dead—she was merely asleep, she must be cared for. And not only would he care for her—he would adorn her with the choicest furs that the north could provide. Slowly and with the utmost care he righted the carryall and placed the silent form among its soft fur rugs. Slowly, deliberately, he straightened out the tangle of dogs and harness. Battling ahead of the panting dogs through the choking smother of driven snow, he set out on the back trail.

At their lonely cabin Playboy's preparations were simple. He laid the parka-hooded figure on the soft caribou skins



"Axe in hand, Playboy paused to watch his "woman".

that covered their rough bunk. For three days there had been no fire and in the flickering candle light the rough log walls sparkled with myriad silvery points of frost. For himself he arranged a sleeping place in the tiny out-kitchen, and once more, but now with a new purpose, resumed the life of the trap line. But wolverines, elusive enemies of the trapper, were abroad. Everywhere he found the pelts of victims of his traps torn or destroyed, the animals themselves partially devoured. Yet furs must be secured. Without hesitation he struck out for the trapping ground of his nearest breed neighbor, "Big Joe" Leblanc.

Followed the inevitable result. The breed quickly discovered that his traps had been raided and at once followed the fresh snowshoe tracks to Playboy's trap-lines—to his cabin. Here friendly remonstrance was met by defiance—by threats of violence. But the trappers' code had been broken and in due time a complaint reached police headquarters at Aklavik. For years the Playboy of other days had been on terms of cordial friendship with such members of the Mounted Police as had crossed his trail. Now the new Playboy was to meet the famous force on a different footing.

Ten days later, Corporal Robinson, with his interpreter, driver and dog train swung into view on the river trail. Leaving his companions on the ice below, he climbed the slope alone and moved toward the cabin. As he approached he was greeted by a warning shout from within. The virus of delusion and temporary insanity, unrestrained by touch of human companionship, was seething through Playboy's veins. His distorted mind saw in the friendly conciliation of the officer only disguised trickery, as, rifle in hand, he flung the door open. With a cheerful greeting Robinson again moved forward, and as he did so Playboy shot from the hip.

* * * *

The interpreter and dog driver had carried the body of the murdered man back to the carryall and, with the dog train, had disappeared around a bend in the river. Alone in the cabin sat Playboy. As reason slowly regained control of his tortured brain the grim significance of his deed became a stark reality. It was not fear of the inevitable consequences of his act that caused him to bury his face in his hands, but the fact that he had taken a human life. He, friend of the Mounties, respected throughout the northland, had in a few brief moments of ungovernable emotion become branded with a new and horrible name—the name of Murderer.

His first reaction was to surrender to the police and pay the just penalty. But life is sweet. Hours later, numb with cold, his resolve taken, he rose stiffly to his feet. Far to the

west lay the fastnesses of the mountain divide and beyond, the great river leading down to the sea. The difficulties to be faced were almost fantastic—but not insuperable. He knew only too well that pursuit, backed by the resources of a nation, would be swift and tireless. But he would have a fair start on his pursuers. Storms that would completely obliterate his trail might come to his aid. Swiftly yet methodically he set about his preparations.

An hour later the carryall stood loaded before the door, the shaggy dogs harnessed and curled in the snow, noses buried in protecting bushy tails. The hour for departure had come. Driving the team a few yards along the trail, Playboy turned slowly and reverently entered the shadowy cabin. With what emotion he carefully re-arranged the furs about the silent form within, with what emotion he gazed for a last lingering moment at the peaceful face! Then sprinkling floor and walls of the hut with kerosene, he stumbled to the door, threw a lighted wisp of paper within, and snapped the heavy lock on the outside. With bowed head and set lips he paused until the lurid red flames of the pyre of his hopes broke through the tiny gleaming window panes. Then cracking the long dog whip with "Mush Leader, mush Hero," he turned his face toward the west. Miles away Leblanc, returning late to his cabin, saw the unusual reflection on the distant hillside . . . and wondered.

* * * *

Five days had elapsed since Playboy had left behind all that was dear to him on earth. But the fates had been kind. In snares set during the brief periods of rest, he had taken ample food for his five dogs. On the fourth day a howling blizzard had swept out of the north across the open tundra and in a few hours a blanket of virgin white had completely wiped out all evidence of his trail. With the first whisper of the rising gale, huddling in the meagre shelter of a clump of willows, his hopes also arose, and on the fifth day he had resumed the task of breaking new trail with renewed strength and courage. But already from the valley of the Big River now far behind, the long arm of the law was reaching out farther and farther, across the white desolation. The crackling wireless had flashed its message to Ottawa—even then a swift plane was winging its way north down two thousand miles of ice-bound waterways. A strong patrol, fully equipped, was mushing up the valley of Rat river.

Sixty below zero!—and under a cloudless sky of dazzling blue, sparkling panorama of snowy plain and crested hill, flecked with bluish shadows, splashed with patches of vivid green, swept to lavender-tinted cloud-piled peaks to the

west. Where the river, winding down from distant foothills plunged over glittering ice-sheathed ledges, white columns of steamy mist lifted fleecy heads in the quiet air. In the intense stillness that brooded over the wilderness, the sharp report of trees riven by the bitter cold, the harsh chatter of a Canada jay, the melancholy croaking of a raven, the sharp staccato of woodpecker on hollow tree, seemed like mighty reverberations. And under outward peace and perfect serenity the relentless business of a frozen world moved calmly, inexorably on. From a nearby lake came the hunger cry as swiftly, warily, gaunt grey wolves closed in on panting moose laboring wearily through the heavy snow. Among the brittle twigs of leafless thickets, rabbits and hares scurried about, prey of weasel and keen-scented fox. Everywhere lurked the white death of killing cold, unseen, silent, sinister—waiting, waiting . . .

Far away, from a patch of scrub spruce within a loop of the river, a dark spot detached itself—and moved out across the open plain. Dwarfed by the vast white spaces, its movement appeared almost imperceptible. A closer view would have discovered a panting man, parka hood thrown back, eyes dimmed by sweat, grimly breaking the heavy trail. Behind him, bushy tails curling over shaggy backs, five powerful dogs dragging a carryall toboggan, floundered along through the loosely compacted snow. In cities far to the south, men and women yawned indifferently as they casually scanned intermittent headlines of the distant drama of life and death—and turned to market quotations or social page.

As yet there had been no intimation of pursuit. Six days had elapsed—another three days and the relative safety of broad timbered slopes of the mighty Yukon would be reached. The thought gave new strength to Playboy's weary limbs as he paused to adjust galling thong fastenings of long trail shoes. But even as once more he resumed his grim march, above the monotonous creak of snowshoes, the soft crunch of trampled snow, the panting of wallowing dogs, a new sound caught his keen ear. For a few brief moments like the faint drone of some monster insect, it came and went on the fitful breeze—quickly developed faint pulsations. As he grasped the menacing significance of the sound, without a moment's hesitation, Playboy, like hunted animal seeking shelter, veered his course toward a thicket of stunted spruce. Rallying his strength for a supreme effort, he plunged frantically ahead—but too late! Before he had covered half the distance the plane was overhead. In long graceful spirals, its wings flashing in the dazzling sunlight, it circled lower and lower toward the dark spot that marked the position of toiling man and dogs. Then, apparently well content with what he had seen, the pilot again straightened away toward the east.



"A dark spot detached itself and moved out across the open plain."

But Playboy knew he had been discovered, that the friendly intervention of storm and snow had been of no avail, that his position was now known. Overcome by the intense physical and mental reaction, he slumped weakly into the soft snow.

But life is dear! Blind love of life, the spirit of a thousand hardy ancestors, the sporting instinct, once more brought him to his feet. Heretofore his progress had been rapid—it now developed into an unrelenting test of speed and endurance. He knew that the men of the pursuing posse had the advantage of relaying each other in the heartbreaking task of breaking trail—that ultimately they would cross his frozen tracks and then, without effort, cover three miles for his one. Fully equipped and without necessity of concealment, the odds were all but overwhelming. And yet . . . Once more indomitable will and fierce determination drove the hunted man forward.

* * * *

It was on the tenth day that hope died as, like sinister menace, the yelping of distant train dogs came faintly across the white expanse. Ten days of almost superhuman physical effort in numbing cold; ten days of hope against hope, of mental torture; ten days of meagre frozen rations hurriedly devoured without water; ten days with only brief snatches of rest and fitful sleep in the lee of crested drift or scant thicket. Almost with relief Playboy realized that at long last the intolerable suspense was over—that the end was now very near.

A faint haloo to surrender. A quarter of a mile away silent figures were moving about in the snow—attempting to take shelter. Playboy knew that now his time had come. Now his dominating thought was that, at the irrevocable end, he must show no fear. Many times during his years in the north he had fearlessly faced wild animals; now, in the fast fading twilight of his life, he must face the Black Beast—Death. But there was no time for emotion. He felt neither hatred nor bitterness toward the men before him—merely an overwhelming realization that he was alone . . . alone! His sole comfort was the familiar feel of rifle gripped in buckskinned hands, his only support the inner power of a pride inherited through long generations, his only desire—rest. With an intense yearning he murmured: "Abidaska! . . . Abidaska!"

Crouching low behind the overturned carryall, with hard and steady eyes, Playboy—grim irony of a name—now playing the final scene of the final act, raised his rifle. A moment

later a distant parka-hooded figure pitched forward. Almost like an echo came the reply as bullets sang like angry hornets across the snow. He felt a sharp stab of pain in his side, a blow on the temple as from a sledge hammer. Blinded with gushing blood, mechanically he still continued to fire. And then a blinding glare blotted out the white world about him as a rending bullet crashed through shrinking body, destroying bone and sinew, draining veins and arteries, contemptuously tearing aside the mysterious veil of the thing called Death.

At the moment when the liberated spirit left the pitiful broken body now slowly staining the trampled snow, even in the moment of the supreme agony of dissolution, what were the thoughts that flashed through the still conscious brain? Did he see through gently swaying palms, the sunlit glitter of sparkling sea? Did he see panorama of mighty lakes and rivers he had known and loved so well? Did he see the gently smiling Abidaska bending closer . . . closer? For when the men of the patrol came up to the litter of shattered barricade they noted that the stiffened lips of Playboy were set in a happy smile.

* * * *

In a dim past thousands of years ago, in the hot lands of the East, there was expounded a grim Mosaic law: An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth! Down through the centuries the law has stood, stern and inexorable, in the east, in the west, in the south . . . and in the white wilderness of the far North.

Our Heritage



"The foaming trails of ancient prow and keel."

The trails of yesterday are our highways of today; our trails of today will be our highways of tomorrow.

Our Heritage

Faint trails through lofty pass and empty plains,
The foaming trails of ancient prow and keel,
Charted the course of teeming ocean lanes,
The rushing splendor of the roads of steel;
Oh, wilderness of mountain, plain and stream!
Our northern empire sweeps from sea to sea,
A mighty giant stirs from age-old dream . . .
And o'er uncharted trails broods destiny!

Our dauntless fathers won the southern land,
Their rutted trails have sired the broad highway,
Now, east and west the busy cities stand,
Crowning the faith and hope of yesterday;
But northward highways fade . . . and trails grow dim . . .
The crowding years spread yet another page,
From empty north beyond horizons rim
Comes challenge of our northern heritage!



• THE CHALLENGE •

In all ages, leadership and progress have been with those peoples who have not only heard—but who have also had the courage and strength to accept the challenge of the future. Stagnation and poverty have come to those who have been content to live in the past. Today the development of Canada's Last Great North—an empire a million square miles in extent—challenges the courage and initiative of the Canadian people.

The Challenge

Since sub-man challenged great cave-bear to right of cavern
dark,

Since his children—greatly daring—first fanned a smouldering spark,
Out of the gloom of fireless cave, up through the broadening dawn.
Like stern compelling mistress, challenge has led men on.

There's challenge in voices of nature, in shout of roaring gale,
In scorching breath of summer drought, in rattle of flailing hail,
There's challenge in depth and dizzy height, there's challenge in
distance far,

In lowly valley and mountain peak, in glimmer of glittering star.

From rock-ribbed hills comes a challenge, to men of hammer and
drill,

And trackless wilderness whispers, "Come, tame me if you will,"
And a taunt comes up from shadowy vale, "Come bridge me with
lofty span."

And sullen roar of mighty fall cries, "Harness me if you can;"
There's challenge in nodding blossom, high up in crannied wall,
The challenge of flaming passion, rings like a bugle call,
There's challenge in pain and suffering, there's challenge in human
need,

In work and play and pleasure, in breathless goddess,—Speed;
Over and under earth and sea and up through trackless air,
The Universe *rings* with challenge,—to men who will do and dare!

And ever new worlds have challenged, ever the age-old quest
Of distant lands has summoned men to South and East and West,
But now the Northland is waking—and over new lands afar
A lusty young giant is calling—son of the bright Pole Star;
And he calls in scream of driving storm, in sigh of vagrant breeze,
In drowsy murmur of babbling brook, in crash of crested seas,
In patter and drip of gentle rain, in thunder of thudding fall,
In eerie cry of lean grey wolves, in loon's sad wavering call;
Blending of myriad voices rising on every hand,
Call of the empty spaces, call of the Great Northland!

* * * *

Under the swinging northern lights, under the midnight sun,
The challenge rings where marsh and moor lie like a verdant lawn,
Over mountain and valley and inland sea, challenge of Northland
cries,

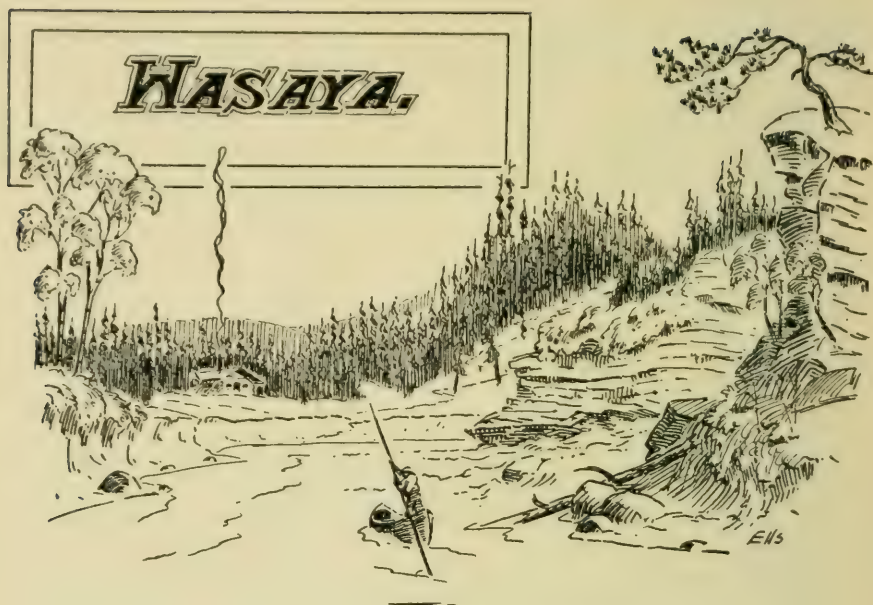
Fair land of far horizons! land where the grey goose flies!

Wasaya

In 1929 one of the writer's white friends of the north country—a trapper—married a native girl. And in accordance with time-honored tradition, his friends looked askance.

In 1932 the writer spent a few hours with the above pair at their log cabin in a remote part of northern Alberta. Team work, a mutual interest and loyal cooperation in the duties of trap line, trail and cabin—in which each took a full share—had unlocked the door to happiness and financial success.

Wasaya is an Ojibwa name signifying "Light."



Where the water trail meets the land trail, and the land
trail climbs the hill,
By the foot of the tumbling rapid, where the water lies deep
and still,

Where the murmuring voice of the river sings through the
summer long,

Till its music is hushed under mantle of snow, when days of
summer are gone,—

A cabin stands in the shadows, embowered in leaf and vine,
And peers from friendly shelter of stately spruce and pine,
Winter or summer one stands by the door or peeps through
frosted pane,

Winter or summer one watches and waits,—to welcome me
back again.

WINTER

Over the smoking barrens, smother of chaos white,
When the wind-swept wastes are blotted out in the murk of
 winter's night,
Through visor of rime-fringed parka hood, through tumult of
 icy gale,
I hear the soft voice of Wasaya at the end of the drifted trail;
The hunting cry of famished wolves sings through the empty
 wood,
And under the glitter of steel-blue stars lies litter of bones
 and blood,
And whimpering dogs a-tremble race through the eerie gloom,
Toward candle gleam 'neath shrouded eaves,—beacon to
 guide me home.



"Over the smoking barrens, smother of chaos white"

SPRING

Silvery tinkle of water, thralldom of winter done,
Grey geese are winging through the mists against the rising
sun,
And myriad sounds of waking life rise like a morning hymn,
Or matin song of choir unseen in sanctuary dim;
Down shadowy isles like incense from censers swinging slow,
Steal fragrant scents of woodland green, of budding branch
and bough,
And as I "lift" my shimmering net I hear Wasaya call,
Where blue haze floats from teepee top, beside the spruces
tall.



"Grey geese are winging through the mists against the rising sun."

SUMMER

The drowsy haze of summer days steals like a silent tide,
Over nameless mountain and river, over tenantless spaces
wide,
Vivid in noonday splendor, ghostly when moonbeams play,
Fading in fairy colors of the departing day.
Mists from the lowlands rising under the dark'ling skies,
Out of the fleecy ocean, islands of spruce arise;
Gentle swish of paddle,—out of the velvet night,
Someone afar is calling me back to a camp-fire bright.

AUTUMN

Over a wonderland—crimson and gold—broods the hush of
the dying year,
And the long-drawn sigh of vagrant breeze breathes through
the branches bare;
With clangor of many voices the geese to the south have gone,
Restless the moose and yapping fox, under the hunter's moon;
Fragrance of soft tanned buckskin,—in well chinked cabin
bright,
Wasaya plies her needle by the soft candle light;
Within is warmth and shelter and cheerful firelight glow,
Without the grey wolves softly pad on newly fallen snow.

* * * *

In stately home and cottage, where pine or palm trees stand,
Crumble the man-made marriage vows, feeble as ropes of
sand;
Greater than solemn ritual, stronger to bind and bless,
Is cheerful hope and courage and mutual helpfulness.
In winter's cold or summer's heat, by water and by trail,
Tho' game and fish elude our skill and tho' the trap-lines
fail,
In want or plenty, joy or pain, in storm or cloud or sun,
Shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, we face the North—as
one!

The Silver Fox

Many people wear furs; only a few know where the furs come from. The northland is as full of tragedy as the crowded cities.

During the winter of 1924 a trapper was lost in a storm near the writer's camp on the Athabaska river. Wolverines had raided his trap-line, and, when found, he had but one piece of fur,—a silver fox. But the cost of that piece of fur was a man's life.

The "great northern sea" refers to Great Slave lake.

*Where roll the jack-pine ridges,
Across the lone northland,
By muskeg, lake, and river,
The trappers' cabins stand.
By the great northern sea
There stand no cities of men,
And I caught the solemn loneliness
Of the great northern fen.*

The Silver Fox

On cabin roof deep lay the snow,
And glittered in a world of white;
The trapper slipped his snowshoes on
And tugged the carryall lashings tight.

The dogs were yelping to be off,
The dog whip snapped like pistol's crack;
Down the slope and over the stream,
They took the trap-line track.

Three days he tramped the trap-line trail,
Fifty miles of swamp and moor,
A silver fox was all he found,—
The wolverines had been before.

He turned,—but clouds crept up the sky,—
Driving snow and bitter gale,—
The dogs went floundering to and fro,
The storm had blotted out the trail.



Three days he struggled through the storm,
Then, heart, and nerve, and sinew done,
He pitched face downward in the snow;
Again the lonely north had won.

The found him when the storm had cleared,—
The famished dogs still crouching near,—
While timber wolves howled a last dirge,
About the trapper's lonely bier.

On cabin roof deep lay the snow,
The northern lights swung o'er the plain;
The whimpering dogs toiled up the slope,
And brought the trapper home again.

* * * *

In rosy glow of boudoir warm,
Aside her silver fox she tossed;
A pink bank cheque,—a scratch of pen,
Was all the thing had cost!!!



The Cariboo Trail



(NOTE:—The Cariboo trail was constructed following the discovery of placer gold in the so-called Cariboo area in 1858. Along this famous trail thousands of men and women of all classes and from many lands endured danger, hardship and privation in the struggle to reach the new El Dorado. In addition to horses and oxen, camels were also used for a time as beasts of burden.)

The Cariboo Trail

In shadowy canyons mists of evening stray,
Wraiths in a world of shadows; like a knell
For fading glory of the dying day,
Comes the faint tinkle of a lone sheep bell;
Wraiths in a world of shadows! Silent, grim,
Steal ghostly forms down rough and winding way
That clings to sombre cliffs and ledges dim—
And wakens memories of a by-gone day!

Along this trail impetuous youth once strode,
And gaily diced with hunger, death and blood,
And faltering age staggered 'neath heavy load,
And East met West above the foaming flood;
For fretting camels, men of eastern tongue,
Jostled in press of motley cavalcade,
While through the ruck great lurching coaches swung,
And sad eyed women plied their ancient trade.

In summer's heat and winter's bitter cold,
Like driven leaves in autumn's whining gale,
The storms of love and lust and lure of gold,
Drove restless men along that winding trail;
From river bars 'rose castles in the air,
Beside the bivouac fires hopes flamed anew,
In the brave days of stirring do and dare,
Along the glamorous, brutal Cariboo.

* * * *

Gone are the actors in a drama bold,
Peaceful in gulch and shadowed vale they lie,
Released from age-old thrall of lure of gold,
The waters' soothing song their lullaby;
But to their memory monuments endure,—
Where once they joy and pain and hunger knew—
In farmsteads, smiling lands and homes secure,
Along the vales where wound the Cariboo!

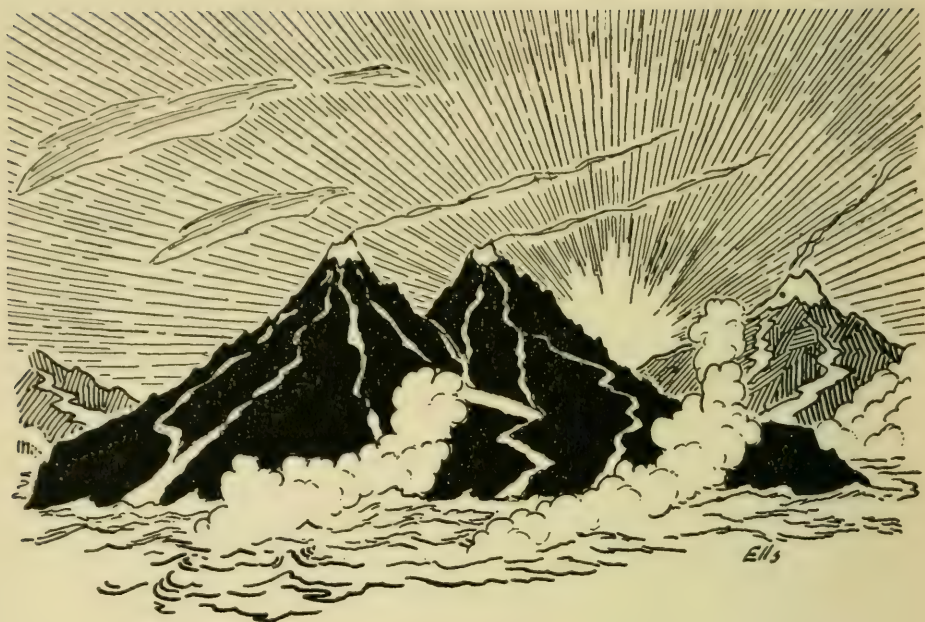
Dawn

While conducting mining operations near McMurray, Alberta, in 1930, the writer discovered excellently preserved fossil trees of Cretaceous and Jurassic age, buried in the bituminous sand*—tangible evidence of the flora which flourished in that part of the world a hundred million years ago. It was a nightmare world, teeming with fearsome animals. Among these were mighty herbivorous and carnivorous dinosaurs—bipeds and quadrupeds—up to one hundred feet in length, flying reptiles, bat-like lizards, sea lizards, sea crocodiles and great toothed birds. On land, along the marshy shores and in the water, they lived and fought and died in the grim and deadly struggle for existence. From a scientific standpoint the discovery of the fossil trees noted above is considered as of first rank importance. The probability that remains of dinosaurs will also be found in the bituminous sand has suggested the following lines. Sketches are based on recognized restorations.

* * * *

*The roar of giant powder shakes the air,
Above the riven earth the smoke cloud clears,
And hands that swing the pick and wield the spade,
Turn back life's page a hundred million years!*

*Also referred to as "tar sand" and "oil sand".

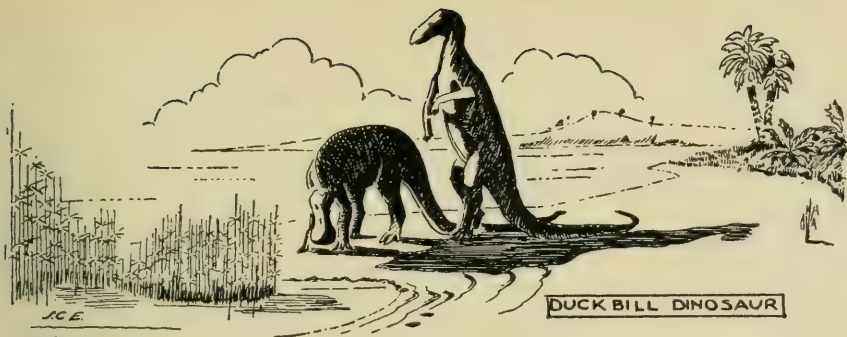


Dawn

The rolling sweep of the Northland,
With its reek of swamp and slough,
Simmered and steamed 'mid sluggish streams
In the days of long ago;
And down each valley trailed misty shrouds,
Where rivers ran down to the sea,
And from far and wide the silent tide
Carried flotsam of beast and tree.

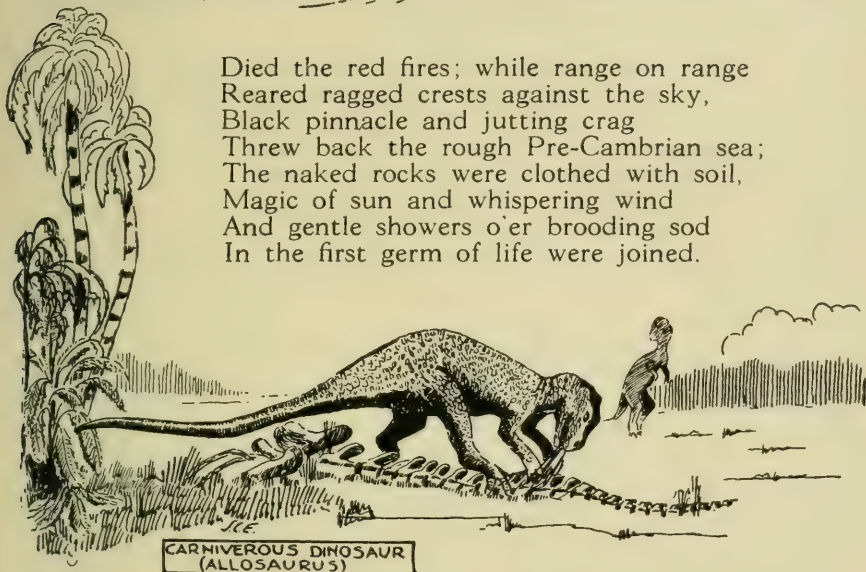
* * * *

The new-born planet drove through space
In swaddlings clothes of steam;
The sullen roar of cosmic war
Rose from the murk and flame,
While primal cyclones raged amain
Above the seismic storm,
A thousand million years ago
A world was taking form.



DUCKBILL DINOSAUR

Died the red fires; while range on range
Reared ragged crests against the sky,
Black pinnacle and jutting crag
Threw back the rough Pre-Cambrian sea;
The naked rocks were clothed with soil,
Magic of sun and whispering wind
And gentle showers o'er brooding sod
In the first germ of life were joined.



CARNIVEROUS DINOSAUR
(ALLOSAURUS)

And up through the Palaeozoic age
The swelling stream of lusty life,
Filled the wide wastes with fearsome beasts,
A nightmare world of savage strife;
In the dim mystery of the swamps,
By still lagoon, in deep bayou,
On hill and fen, in highland glen,
On ancient bog and steamy slough.



BRONTOSAURUS
(THUNDER LIZARD)

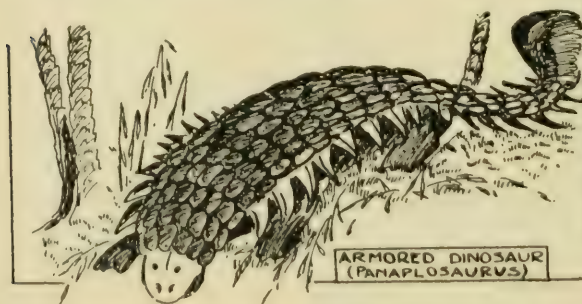


'Neath massive gladiatorial shield
Moved the great horned dinosaur;
With mighty jaws and rending claws
The tyrant lizard strode the moor.
With massive flank and huge splayed
toes,

In reedy sanctuary home,
The Duckbill's tail like mighty flail,
Lashed the still waters into foam.

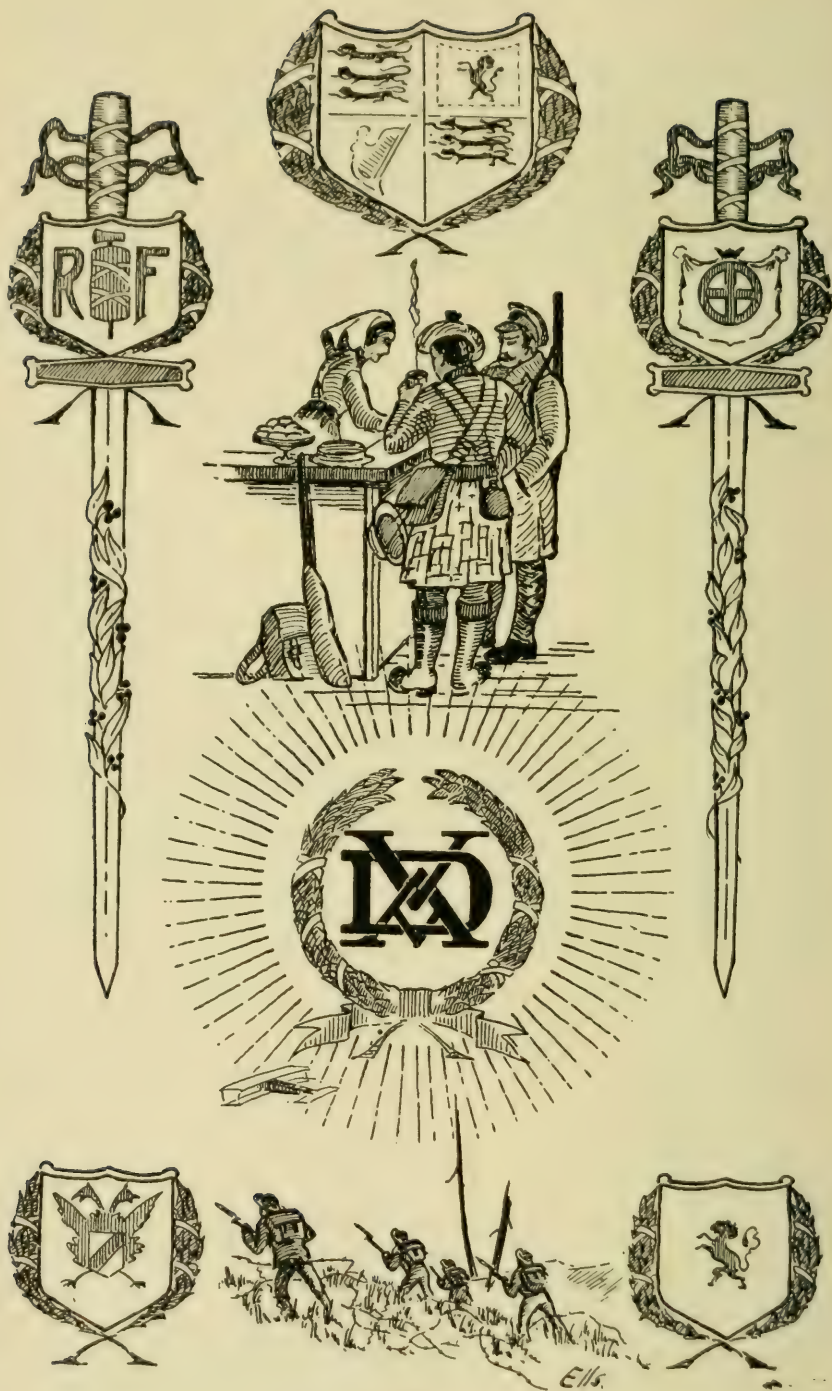


Blindly they lived and fought and died;
The elemental ruthless war,
The bitter strife of jungle life
Vanquished the mighty dinosaur.
Engulf'd by rising foaming flood,
In oily sands embedded fast,
Their giant forms shall rise again
And lift the curtain of the past.



* * * *

The rolling sweep of the northland,
With its reek of swamp and slough,
Simmers and steams 'mid sluggish streams
As it did,—in the long ago.
And down each valley trail misty shrouds,
Where rivers wind down to the sea,
While from far and wide the silent tide
Carries flotsam of beast and tree.



The V.A.D.

Written in a V.A.D. hostel, 1918

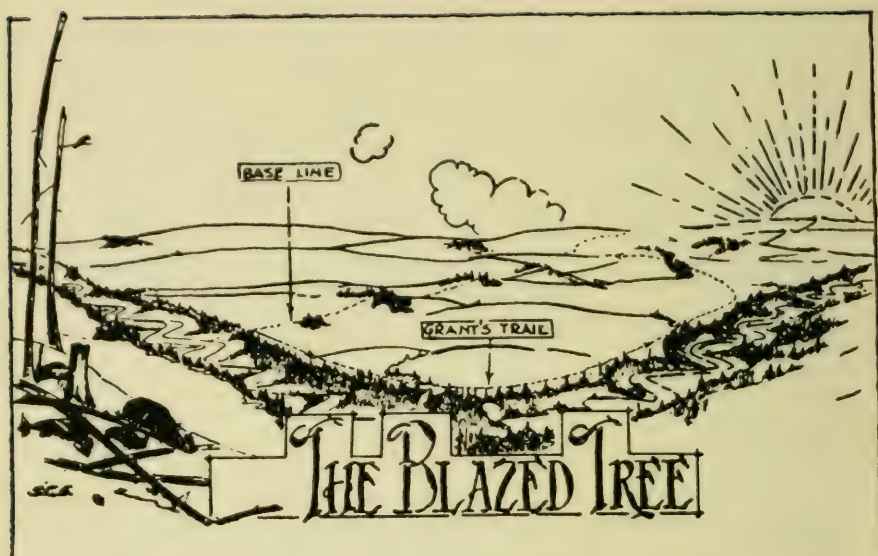
During the early part of the war, decorations were sometimes given for work "behind the lines". Until after the Armistice, no official decoration was available to V.A.D. workers.

* * * *

One got the Military Cross,—for cleaning out a nest of guns;
One got the D.C.M. and bar,—for gutting twenty bloomin'
Huns;
Behind the lines,—God save the mark!—one got the D.S.O.;
And a third got Special Mention,—when he pulled some special
show.

* * * *

But the V.A.D. got up at five,—and did her bit through four
long years,
And there were no 'purple pages'.—and there were no bands,
or cheers;
And she's got no decoration yet,—though as far as I can see,
'Twould have been a bloody awful war, without the V.A.D.!



In Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, base-lines which cross the country in an east-west direction at intervals of twenty-four miles, constitute a part of the framework of the land survey system. When surveyed, cut out and blazed many years ago, they were easily seen, but in bush country they are now choked with second growth several feet in height. A distant vista however, still shows a clear cut opening at the sky-line. Game trails made by moose, caribou and deer, and at times worn to a depth of several inches, frequently follow these old lines for long distances. In open, burned over country, largely devoid of forest growth, even the most careful search often fails to discover the base-lines, and skilled woodsmen may unknowingly cross and recross them many times.

The Blazed Tree

To those who have imagination, what significance, what eloquence may lie in that simple phrase, "the north country". To those who know, what memories it may awaken.

To those whose memory carries them back but half a century, there has been "the west", "the great west", "last great west", and "new north". But, with the quick passage of the years, these terms have largely lost their significance, for the panorama of western and northern development has become merged with that of older settled Canada. But Canada still has her "last north", she still boasts a frontier.

Through the wide empty plains of northern Alberta,—still a blank space on the map—Firebag river winds to the west through a veritable Devil's Garden. It is a land of weary wastes of barren sand; of seemingly endless muskeg and treacherous grassy slough; of drainage channels that begin nowhere and end nowhere; of mysterious pot-hole lakes and ponds with neither inlets nor outlets. Everywhere, on low rounded hills, on long sweeping slopes and on level windswept uplands, lie innumerable boulders—great and small—relics of the age of ice. Again and again and again, forest fires have devoured all traces of vegetation. Yet ever some seeds have struggled into life to give rise to occasional plantations of rugged jack-pine and spruce. At all seasons, driving gales riot across this meeting place of the winds, this fertile breeding ground for storms. Truly a Devil's Garden, truly a land forlorn.

Through an area thousands of square miles in extent, and otherwise devoid of landmarks, surveyed base-lines constitute the sole sign of the one time presence of man. Straight and true as the Pole Star, these evidences of the early surveyors, leap valleys and foaming streams. Like lines ruled by a giant hand they strike across wide morass and unswervingly climb the rough ridges. Where a line tops a wooded crest, a clear cut notch in the timber stands out sharply defined against the sky. To travel for months through an uninhabited wilderness, and then suddenly to see the great line topping ridge after ridge as far as the eye can see, is one of the most uncanny—and at the same time reassuring—sights of the north country. It is a link with the outside, forged in the furnace of toil and hardship.

During winter months, occasional breed trappers with their trains of starving dogs, work their way northward from the primitive settlements and nondescript trading posts south of the Clearwater river. With the lengthening days of spring,

the hard won catch of fox and wolf, of ermine and otter, of beaver and rats, begins that long, long journey from the dark noisome trapping hovels of the north to the exotic salons of Oxford Street, of the rue de la Paix, and of Fifth Avenue. Once more for many months, hills and valleys and waterways are void of human life as a lost world. Summer trails there are none—other than those of moose and deer. Deeply worn where footing is soft, faint and scarce visible on the bleak, rocky hillsides, they radiate in every direction from feeding ground and watering place . . .

In a country such as this, Peter Grant and his crew of hard-bitten men found themselves early in September. For months they had prospected the Pre-Cambrian to the east of the Fourth Meridian, but finally, at signs of approaching winter, had turned westward along the twenty-fifth base line, heading for the valley of the Athabaska. Scarcity of feed, treacherous quaking bogs and the ravages of flies, had taken their inevitable toll of a once imposing pack-train. Now, but four animals still struggled forward under their heavy packs.

Where the faint traces of the base line trail reached the edge of Firebag valley, the base line itself once more became a reality on the well timbered slopes. Small areas of open bottom lands interrupted the dense growth of spruce that crowded along the shores of the river itself. In this oasis, camp had been pitched among the rotting stumps of the old line. The morning sun had not yet peeped down into the shadowy valley. It would still be another two hours before the first level rays would filter through the scant fringe along the crest of the slope, and turn to gold the autumn leaves on the further side. There was a sharp chill in the air—eloquent of approaching winter. A low lying bank of fog, like some great grey caterpillar, outlined along the valley floor the winding course of the river. Out of the greyness, and seemingly muffled by its very density, came voices of running water—gurgling in the eddies, chattering over the shingle bars, roaring at the heavy chutes. There were no other sounds. The owls were silent after the night's foraging, song birds had not yet ventured forth. Coyotes and an occasional wolf hunted silently through the dense undergrowth. Within the loops of the river a dense growth of rank grasses, now brown and sodden, glistened with frost. Densely-wooded slopes climbed up to the rolling table-land that stretched wearily away to the horizon.

Presently, on one of the grassy patches beside the noisy invisible river, signs of life appeared. A man emerged from one of the small tents and silently touched a match to firewood already laid. Almost instantly the tinderlike dead

spruce branches leaped into vivid flame. The dingy canvas of the tents sprang into sharp relief. Early morning shadows again crowded about. But another day had begun.

Other figures emerged from the canvas shelters, paused a moment at the cheerful warmth of the fire, and silently separated again. Two disappeared into the dripping undergrowth in search of the pack horses. One figure in torn kahki, that still showed faint evidence of its one-time "cut", moved here and there—supervising. It was a fine display of invisible discipline. There was no lost motion. All old hands at the game.

Presently other sounds were heard. Song birds began to fly from tree to tree; a Canada jay called his old familiar message. A whirring of wings and low muttered cries overhead, told of a flight of wild ducks speeding through morning mists to distant feeding grounds. In a nearby thicket a lonely grouse drummed out the old, old tale. Harsh jangling sounds told that the bell mare and her sorry retinue had been rounded up and headed for camp.

With a single comprehensive glance, a nondescript figure that for an hour had been busy about the camp-fire, noted the progress of activities by the rest of the crew. Now his half defiant, wholly triumphant, "Grub Pile", echoed back from green valley walls. A cheerful clatter of tinware prefaced the first meal of the day, as the men, their ragged overalls wet and glistening in the firelight, crowded about pots and pans simmering in the hot ashes. Formality there was none—but there was all the consideration and toleration of men trained and disciplined to the trail.

And now packs had been adjusted on flinching backs of unwilling horses; the last cinch had been tightened, the last hitch made fast. As the sun glinted down into the valley, men and horses began the ascent; but Grant did not follow. He had decided to work down Firebag river for a few miles, look over rock exposures, and then strike south-west and pick up the trail of the pack animals. The following night he would overtake the party. Meanwhile, he dispensed with a blanket but carried light rations for a day and a half. Such manoeuvres had become almost routine by now, and yet—days were fast becoming shorter, and the weather more uncertain. At the last moment he fastened his rifle on one of the horse packs.

The main party filed away to the west, fixing their course by the notch of the base line on a distant horizon. Grant set out down stream. At noon, quietly munching bannock and smoked moose meat, he idly watched a pair of industrious beaver cutting and gathering their winter's supply of food.

Estimating that he was now some ten miles down stream, from the previous night's camp, Grant climbed out of the valley, glanced at his pocket compass, and struck south-west across the rolling burnt land. Then the unexpected happened and a shadow crept over the face of the sun. Looking up, he saw black clouds rushing up from the east and almost at the same moment a half gale was sucked in from the west. It was merely a matter of minutes before the storm broke, and half an hour later the deluge of rain ceased as suddenly as it had commenced. Again the sun shone from a cloudless sky, but Grant knew only too well that the tracks of his four pack horses had been wiped out as completely as though a giant's hand had been brushed across the landscape. He might still be fortunate enough to pick up the old blazed base line itself where it passed through a patch of timber. Judging that he was still some three miles north of the base line, he headed toward one of the timbered areas.

Estimating his rate of travel, he fought his way vigorously through wire-like entanglements of fire-killed second growth, and over the network of fallen trees. At the end of two hours he reached green timber and, with every faculty alert, traversed it from north to south. But keen eyes and a "nose" for trails failed to detect a sign, either of the base line or of the passage of horses. Emerging from the southern edge of the bush, he struck out for a second timbered area. But two hours later there was still no sign of cut line or horses' tracks. The sun dipped below the horizon. A cool night wind sprang up. Soon the desolate landscape was blotted out. Grant kindled a small fire, dined sparingly on soggy bannock and smoked meat, dried his clothes and curled up on a bed of pine boughs. Somewhere—doubtless within a radius of a few miles—were the other members of the party. Reassured by this reflection, and drowsy in the warmth of his fire, he fell asleep. All about, gaunt skeletons of the ruined forest stood dimly etched against the starlit sky . . .

An hour before daylight Grant piled fresh wood on the embers of his fire, drank from a nearby pond, and ate. But with the cold grey dawn no sun appeared. Even as he considered his next move, fine mist crept over the inhospitable waste, changed to a drizzle—to a steady rain. After months of brilliant sun and blazing stars, the weather had broken; but Grant was only vaguely disturbed as he reviewed his position. Undoubtedly he was now south of the line of march taken by his men. But how far? He still had short rations for another day. After that—what? In such weather a fire could be seen, how far?—possibly half a mile. To build and maintain, if possible, a log and brush fire, uses up energy—and energy means food. Well, he had never been "bushed"

before and had no serious apprehension now. Compass in hand, he headed north-west.

Even in summer continued exposure to rain and a raw north wind will chill the blood more effectually than the low temperatures of dry winter weather. By ten o'clock, in spite of violent exertions, Grant was numb to the bone. It was with the greatest difficulty that he kindled a small fire in the lee of a heap of blow-down, and this gradually restored his circulation. Again he went on. By the edge of marshy pond, tucked away in a fold of the hills, he came face to face with a cow moose. The moose lifted her head, regarded the strange figure for a moment, and quietly resumed her feeding. A gaunt grey timber wolf, travelling silently across his line of march, paused uncertainly and loped quickly away. Grey geese, south-bound and flying low, passed honking overhead.

Later, when descending the steep slope of a coulee, his foot slipped on a wet log. Pitching forward, he crashed heavily among fire-killed branches. By a desperate effort he avoided one of the cruel jagged stubs and only his cheek was torn. With set lips he rose to his feet and again went forward. But now more slowly—and with a pronounced limp. Around him was only the patter of rain, and the creak of grey poles swaying stiffly in the moaning wind.

In the early dusk Grant reached the edge of a wide wooded area. At last here was shelter from driving rain and piercing wind. Without hesitation he plunged into dense wet undergrowth and stumbled forward among shadowy trunks. Instinct told him that he must have warmth—and soon. Under dripping branches and among sodden leaves, he nursed a spark into a tiny flame, then into a blaze, and thanked God that his ancestors, in some far dim age, had discovered the miracle of fire.

The life-giving flames crept up and about the hissing, steaming wood as Grant, the pain in his leg momentarily forgotten, dragged together fuel and piled it high. Then came reaction and he slumped at the foot of a tree. As the flames mounted higher, wavering shadows were pressed further and further back; the foliage stood out a mass of vivid green, among which the branches overhead were ebony black. And as the circle widened, other objects became visible. Two logs at a little distance especially held Grant's attention. They had lodged with the butts somewhat in the air and free of roots. Now, covered with moss, they still remained in the unusual position. And then, as the fire seized on a resinous branch, and momentarily blazed high, something else caught his watchful eye.

Pulling himself to his feet, Grant moved slowly toward one of the larger trees. Some three feet above the ground a mass of balsam gum had formed over an old scar. Now, nearly hidden by moss, it was just discernible. Leaning against the trunk, he passed his hand over the bark. To left and to right of the scar he had first observed were other partly covered marks—clearly made by an axe. Scars facing west, south and east,—a blazed line-tree!

For several minutes Grant did not move. Standing with his eyes closed he gently stroked the blazes made by some long-forgotten axeman. He knew that other and similar blazes marked other trees all along the hundred miles between himself and the Athabaska.

In the early dawn the cutting of the base line—choked with alders and other second growth, could be clearly seen. And to the west, a sharply defined notch marked the point where it topped the distant ridge. The pocket compass would no longer be required, and an hour later Grant sniffed the faint acrid odor of wood smoke. A few minutes more and a puff of blue drifted across the line in the valley below. And then there came faint jangle of a distant bell.

A hundred yards from camp Grant paused and with trembling fingers rolled and lighted a cigarette. Then, pulling himself together, he strode unsteadily toward the patches of dingy canvas. From the stooping figure beside the pots and pans came a casual "Hello, Chief! Missed you at supper last night". And what a world of confidence tone and words implied!

Came the nonchalant reply: "Well, I found some rather interesting fossils down river and stayed a little longer than I had expected. Could do with a cup of coffee, though."

Another day had begun.

Three weeks later, Grant and his party dropped off the train from the north. A note in the newspaper merely stated that one "David Grant and his party had returned from the north country after an absence of several months."

There was nothing about a blazed tree,—nor a lot of other things that were all in the day's work. The roots of the Canadian mining industry have many and strange ramifications.

Camp Fire



The discovery of fire, accidental or otherwise, by our early ancestors, the primitive cave men, proved the salvation of the race in central Europe during the inclement glacial periods. Since that time myriad camp fires have brought safety, comfort and true unalloyed pleasure to untold generations of woodsmen and travellers—and to canoe-honeymooners.

Camp Fire

When glittering glaciers southward creaked like ponderous
menace pale,
And groped with numbing fingers through ancient gorge and
vale,
Like shadowed sightless sockets beneath grey craggy brows,
Dark caverns peered from rugged cliffs through overhanging
boughs;
When winter's storms draped valley walls with snowy curtains
white,
And deadly threat of piercing cold stole through the frosty
night,
Naked in dripping fireless gloom crouched driven brutish
men,
O'er bloody feast of slaughtered beast they barked and growled
—and then
Came blessed miracle of fire! benign and beaming sire
Of cheerful warmth and mellow light—of flickering bivouac
fire!

* * * *



A portage trail climbs valley slopes
where chequered shadows sleep,
And winds through stoney uplands
and rolling burnt-lands sweep,
And creak of sweat-stained harness
and rasp of iron-shod feet
Break hush of misty morning and
noonday's sultry heat;
But when o'er swamp and reeking
fen night mists spread, soft and
grey,
And booming cry of lonely owl
sounds knell of dying day,
Then sweat-dimmed eyes grow
brighter when they see the ruddy
glow,
And men bless flickering camp-fire
in valley down below.

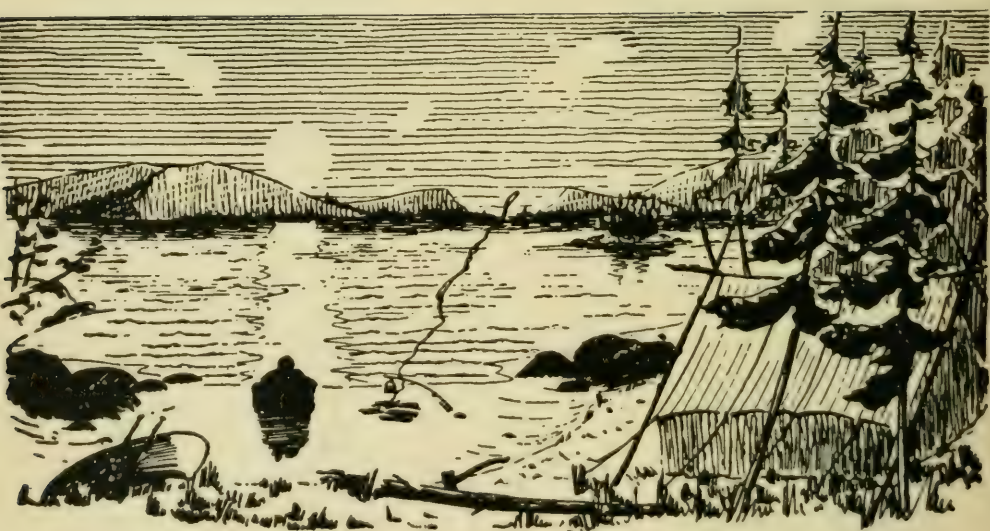


O, there's boisterous taunt and challenge where crested waters leaps
Where there's swirl of flashing rapid,
and foam-flecked eddies deep;
And canoemen meet the challenge
of crumbling foam and shoal,
With strength and skill and cunning,
with tracking line and pole.
But when hoarse voice of waters
fades below the rapid's rim,
When down the leafy forest isles
steals song-birds' vesper hymn,
Then the long wet trail fades swiftly
in the incense-laden haze,
And in the warmth and witchery of
camp-fire's ruddy blaze.

Where lean grey poles nod stiffly
above a frozen world,
Where spin drift streams across the
plain like pennons white unfurled,
Where shrouded spruce, like sentinel
ghosts crowd silent sheltered vale,
O'er sedgy slough and frozen stream
winds the long trap-line trail;
Sobbing breath in tossing boughs,
panting breath of men below,
Creak and click of long trail-shoes,
sleigh dogs toiling through the
snow,
Gnawing hunger, biting cold,
through fast deeping shades of
night,
Radiant beacon of the trail, God-
giv'n boon of camp-fire bright.



Twittering birds and saffron dawn, languorous airs and golden
noon,
Afterglow and fading day, darkness—and the silvery moon;
Thronging through the velvet night to the throb of elfin drum,
Down broad silvery pathway bright, fancy's fair dream-
children come;
Call of lonely whip-poor-will,—'neath the greenwood's fra-
grant veil
Glow of flickering camp-fire lights, honeymoon's enchanted
trail;
Through the years its glow will warm, through the years its
flame will shine,
Fragrant memories recall, redolent of spruce and pine!



Children of the Dawn

Not everyone realizes the long grim struggle that has marked the spiritual, mental and physical evolution of the human race during the thousand centuries prior to times of recorded history. Fish, roots, berries, and such wild animals as primitive man could take by skill or cunning alone stood between him and starvation. When food was scarce, bands ranged far and wide, killing or being killed. Such was the life of our progenitors through the many hundreds of generations that lived and suffered and died that you and I might be. The Old Man of the clan or tribe—master of all the women—ruled supreme. Differences of opinion were summarily decided by the rude law of the club.

Naked and homeless in a world of savage and hostile beasts, it required many thousands of years for the mentality of early man to grasp even the first faint idea of symmetry and to devise and shape his first rude flint implement. Other thousands of years preceded the miracle of fire.

But a few hundred generations is not a sufficient time in which to modify materially the inherent character of the human species. Jealousy and fear still quickly revive instincts inherited from the cave man. We have to some extent tamed the elements and the brute creation,—ourselves but superficially.

Sketches are based, in part, on drawings by Quennel and others.





Children of the Dawn

The flickering firelight softly gleams,
 While shadows wander to and fro,
 Dim forms crowd fast from out the past,
 Shades of the men of long ago.
 From fireless caves and shelters rude,
 From the dim mists of days long gone,
 Down the long road the fathers trod,—
 Trail of the Children of the Dawn,—
 They come! The homeless Piltdown men,
 Men of the old Cro-Magnon race,
 Neanderthal and Mauer men,
 Men of the woods, the hills, the chase.

* * * *

No flocks nor herds to fill their wants;
 With fist and club and Simian teeth
 The wolfish horde, naked and scarred,
 Harried the beasts on hill and heath;
 Cave hyena and mammoth tusked,
 Sabre-toothed tiger and great cave bear,
 Fierce cave lion and mighty elk,
 Bison, reindeer, tusked wild boar.



The watch fire waved its flaming torch
 On open plain, in sheltered glen,
 In the chill night the wavering light
 Lit up the ring of shaggy men;
 With beetling brow and ape-like mien
 They crouched about the bloody feast;
 With heavy stones they cracked the bones
 And tore the flesh of bird and beast.



Short was the shrift for old and weak,
 Only the strong survived;
 Hard were the lives of those who lived,—
 And the end of those who died.
 For the club's grim law was the law of the life
 Of Children of the Dawn.
 Ten thousand generations passed
 Ere laws of man were drawn.

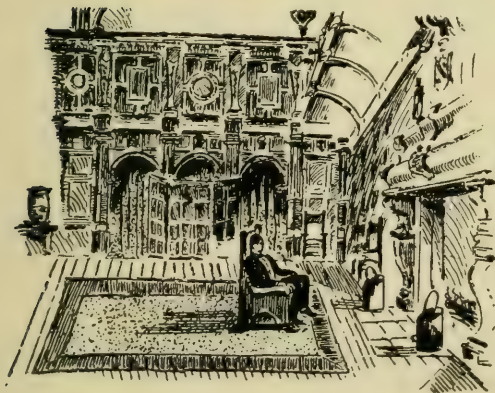
Homeless in world of savage foes,
 In forests wide, on grassy plain,
 Bloody and torn by beast and thorn,
 They rose and fell, and rose again!
 To grasp the first dim thought of shape,
 To shape a flint in manner crude,
 To barb a shaft with cunning craft,
 And helve a stone in manner rude.—

Untutored slowly waking minds
 Through the long centuries struggled on;
 With growing dower of mental power,
 They stood erect,—Men of the Dawn!
 Words followed hard on quickened thought,
 Hoarse guttural sounds to speech gave place,
 While humble start of simple art
 Banished "the winter of the race".

* * * *

The fireless caves lie far behind,
 Fades the dim trail in mists of years;
 Ages of flint and bronze and iron,
 Ages of bloody strife,—and tears.
 From out the mists of times unknown,—
 Long ere the age of stone,—
 When the "law of Might and the right of Might"
 Rested on brawn and bone,—

Comes the fathers' trail; and winding on
 Fades in mists of doubts and fears;
 The shuttle flies while warp and woof
 Fall fast from the loom of the years;
 And in far days of a future time
 When others turn back the page,
 Will the coming age stand as the Age of Gold,—
 Or stand as the Golden Age?





During the winter of 1924 two men were lost in a blinding snow storm near the writer's camp on the edge of the wide barrens to the east of Athabaska river. A chance shift of wind brought to them a whiff of smoke from a camp fire just within the edge of the timber,—and saved their lives. The above incident suggested the following lines.

Wood Smoke

From crannied rock and garden, from glade and hillside bare,
Comes scented breath of lowly flower, of shrub and blossom
rare,

From cherry blossoms pink and white, sparkling with morning
dews,

From regal lily's glistening lips, stained with rose-purple hues;
From fragrant starred clematis that hangs from garden wall,
From pendant honey-laden blooms of scented linden tall,
From primrose gemmed with blossoms along the neat hedge-
rows,

From apple blossoms' fragile blooms, white as new fallen
snows.

On drowsy senses sweet perfumes of flower and shrub may
fall,

But other scents may rouse the pulse like strong imperious
call,

In yawning pit and dripping shaft, in galleries' shadowy
gloom,

Where craggy walls of lofty stopes, out of the darkness loom,—
The foggy breath of powder-smoke whispers of rending shock,
Of thudding blast and avalanche of shattered ore and rock.

Behind the shearing plowshare bright stretch the long furrows
brown,

And the moist breath of fallow loam comes to the plowman
lone,

And age-old instinct dimly stirs, hope beckons ever on,
As the soft voice of Mother Earth whispers to soil-stained
son.

Over the somnolent silvery waves comes caress of the evening
breeze,

And out of the rushing roaring gale comes challenge of tumb-
ling seas,

And the clean salt tang of ocean's breath calls to the sailor
bold,

As it did to weary war-worn Greeks marching down to the
sea of old.

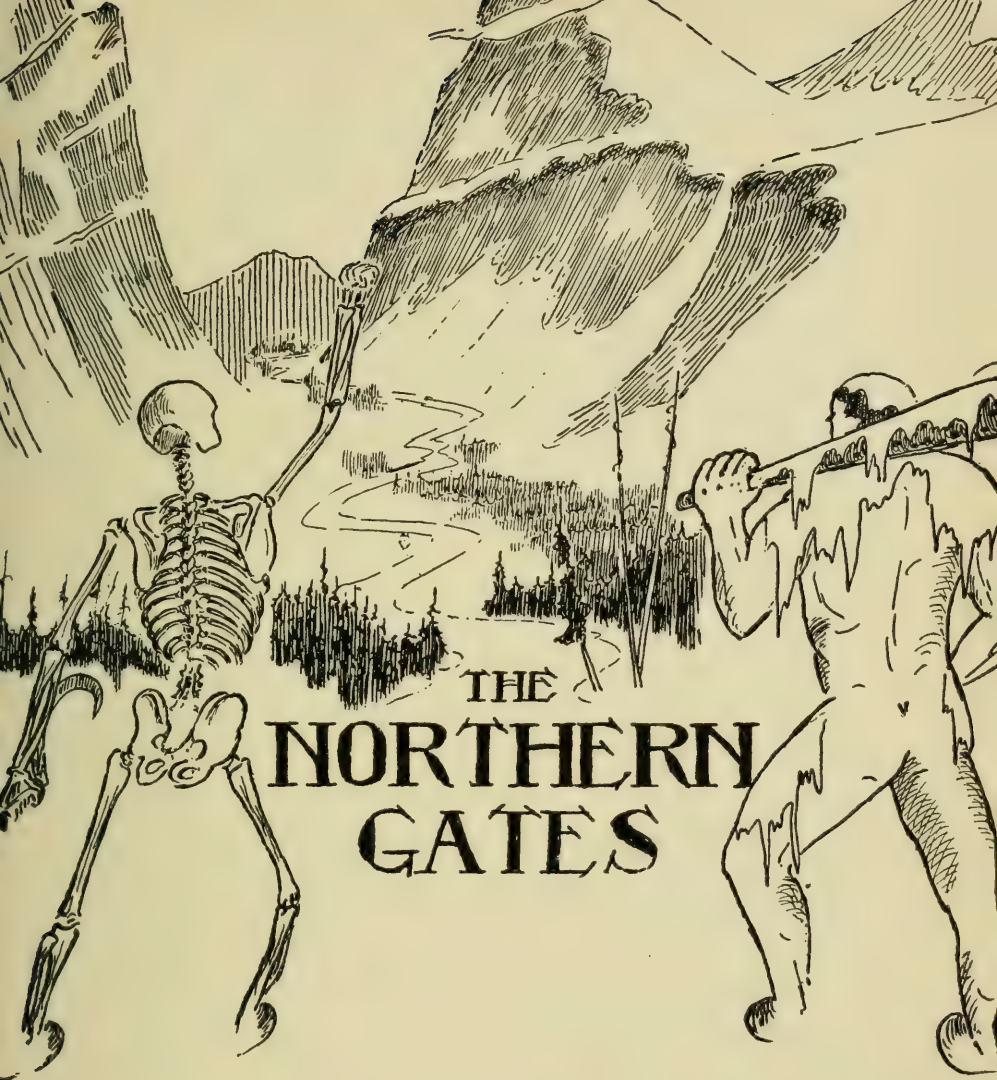
The peat smoke calls to the cotter, the smell of the sawdust
brown

Calls to the tight-rope walker and grimacing painted clown,
And reek of reeling stoke-hold and clanging furnace door,
Calls to the grimy, sweating sons of scoop and slicer-bar.

But down from the misty long ago of fireless caverns dark,
When the Fathers first ravelled the stubborn wood and fanned
the smouldering spark,
The scent of the good blue wood smoke where bivouac fires
gleam,
Has called to men of the rolling plain, to men of forest and
stream.

* * * *

Just a wisp of smoke! but from sheltering spruce on edge of
barrens white,
Its breath spells life to panting men in tempest of winter
night.
Just a wisp of smoke! but from lowly cot the scent of its
trailing plume
Gladdens the heart of the settler lone,—wearily plodding
home.
Just a wisp of smoke! but its faint blue haze floating from
teepee tall
Welcomes the hunter home from the chase,—when shades
of evening fall.
Just wisps of smoke! but through the North their azure
banners stand,
Marking the conquering march of men,—*the conquest of the
land.*



It is generally agreed that aeroplanes have done more than any other single agency to advance and assist mineral development in the Great Bear lake and other areas in northern Canada.

The Northern Gates

The noisy strife of the world of men, crowded the echoing
years,
Greed and passion, love and hate, want amid plenty—and
tears;
But in brooding hush of the silent North the empty days stole
away,
While warp and woof from the loom of the years unfolded —
spotless and grey;
Save where crimson flecks marked trappers' "kill", or bloody
tribal feud,
And broken cairns of vanished men rose in the solitude.

* * * *

Two giants stood at the Northern Gates, and their names
were Hunger and Cold,
And they sneered at the weak and faint-hearted—but they
challenged the hardy and bold;
And beyond in his rock-bound fastness, by rocky cliff and
scaur,
Alone in the empty silence, slumbered the mighty Bear.

Hidden in blinding chaos of winter's swirling snow,
Tinted in rainbow colors of summer's sunset glow,
The serried crests of rugged hills lay like a barrier grim,
And pierced the clouds with beetling brows along the northern
rim.

By portage, canoe and by dog train over winding trails from
the South,
Came seasoned hard-bitten veterans, came eager impetuous
Youth,
And the Great Bear stirred in his slumber and blinked in his
snug retreat,
At the sound of the faint click of paddle and the shuffle of
mocassined feet.

But the airmen had conquered the Bulgar, the Terrible Turk
and the Hun,
And northward they turned their faces, toward other fields
to be won;
And they "crashed" the forbidding Northern Gates and
laughed at the giants twain,
As up from the far away South they swung and over the
northern plain,

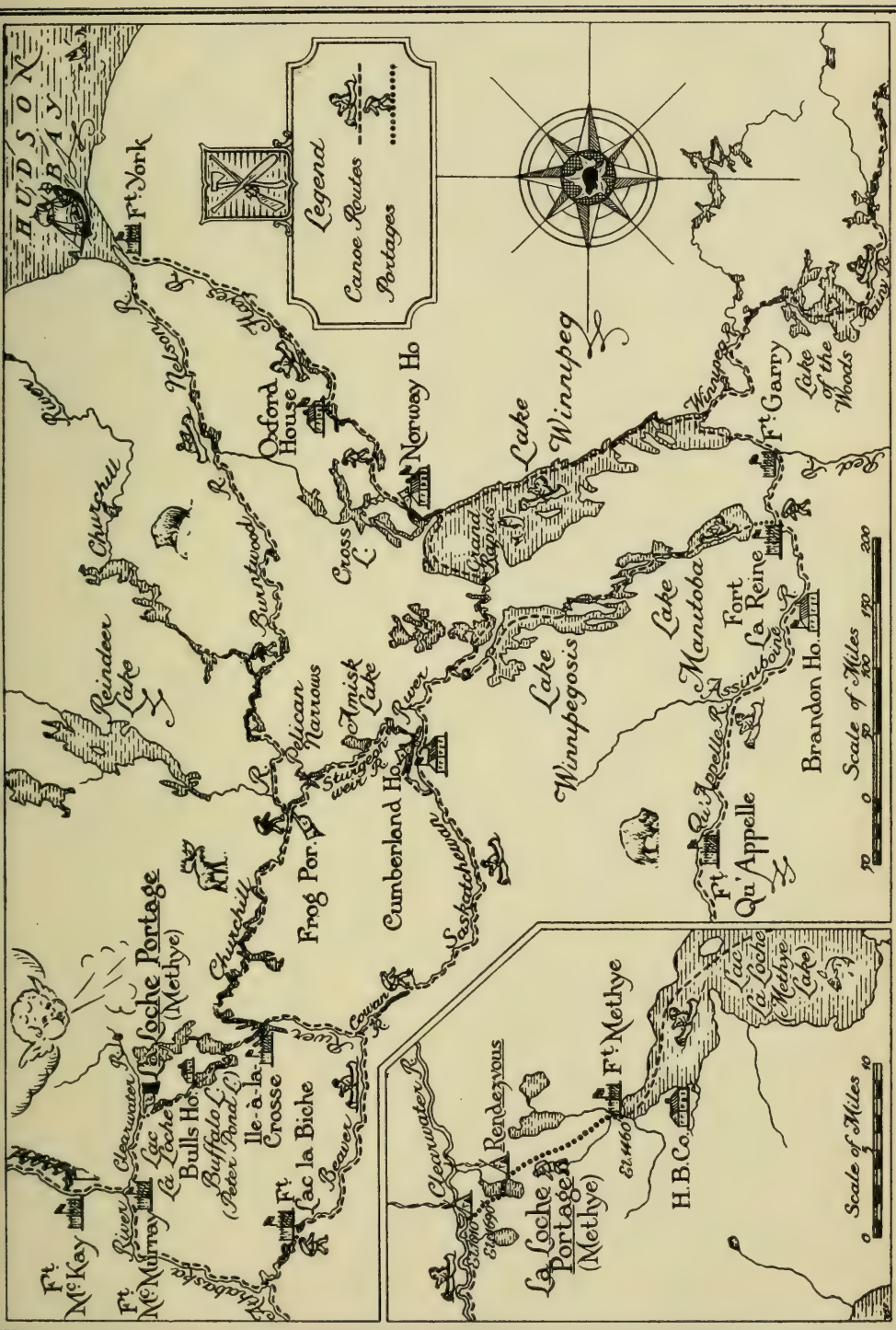
With throbbing beat of engines thrown back from cliff and
scaur,
The planes came roaring down the skies—and waked the
mighty Bear.

* * * *

In glow of waving northern lights, in glare of midnight sun,
Over hill and valley and the lonely lake the planes come—
one by one,
And gone is the brooding hush of the North, and gone is the
silence long,
For the voice that awakened the sleeping North was the aero-
plane engine song.

Portage La Loche

On maps and in various published references the portage and lake referred to in the following article are variously named "La Loche" and "Methye". The latter name is derived from a Cree word, "Mihyey". Both "La Loche" and "Mihyey" signify the humble "tommycod".



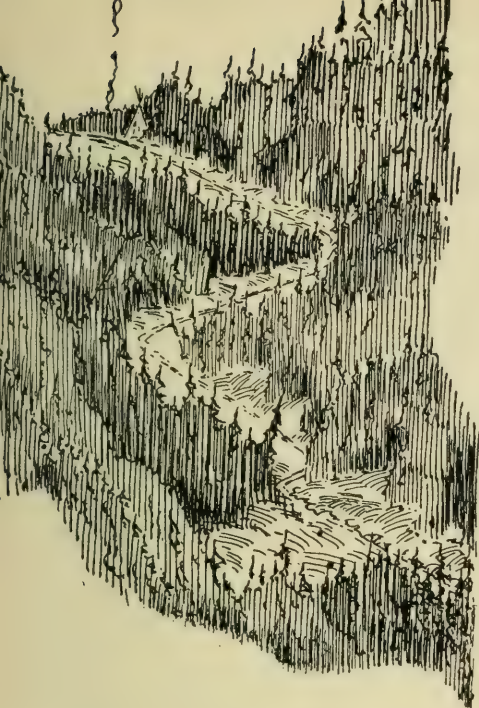


Portage La Loche

Since the dawn of recorded history—and undoubtedly since much earlier times—mankind has worshipped power and fame and beauty. To this may be ascribed the development and subsequent transitory fame of La Loche portage. Down through the centuries of a dim and distant past, these loadstones drew to themselves over nameless trails, caravan routes and dimly charted sea lanes, a never ceasing tribute of tears and gold and service. Successively the ruthless and blood-stained civilizations of the Sumarians, the Semites and the Assyrians, which rose and fell in the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, drew to themselves the tribute of distant lands. Thousands of years before the Christian era, when Egypt was the dominant power of the Mediterranean world, there had flowed into the valley of the Nile a ceaseless stream of gold and precious stones, of ivory and myrrh, of countless herds of cattle and of slaves. To Rome, at the zenith of her might and splendor, came silks from China, furs from Scythia, metals from Britain, rare woods from Africa—and a thousand luxuries to gratify the demands of her powerful and pampered rulers. Similarly, in the Orient, under the Tang, the Sung, and the Ming dynasties, far distant lands paid their tribute to the fame and power and beauty of ancient China.

Amid the frightful storms of Gothic wars, Rome fell; from the ruins of her vanished greatness arose the so-called Christian powers of western Europe. And with the discovery of a new continent beyond the Western Sea, still other tides of tribute commenced to flow toward established power. But through new channels—over primitive cart tracks, down winding shadowy trails, along mazy labyrinths of lake and river and lonely forest stream. From the struggling colonies of the middle and southern Atlantic seaboard came indigo, tobacco and rice; from the vast and mysterious hinterland of the west and north a seeming endless stream of furs.

Meanwhile, from the bleak shores of Hudson's Bay and from the rude settlements along the St. Lawrence, exploration and barter were pushing further and further into the wilderness—hand in hand. From the meagre shelter of arduously



bloody climax—the lure of a water route to the Pacific and to the far north still beckoned. Finally, in the early summer of 1778, Peter Pond, pathfinder, soldier of fortune and stormy petrel of stormy times, gazed eagerly north from the divide which marked the parting of the waters. Toward the south and east a thousand miles of lake and river led to the shores of Hudson's Bay. Toward the north and west stretched the great water-

built stockades on the shores of the Bay, the Gentlemen venturers followed great nameless rivers toward the south and southwest. From Quebec and Montreal reckless and indomitable spirits of *l'ancien regime* pressed on toward the western plains, makers of history in the face of almost incredible hardship and danger in the *Pays d'En Haut*. A mighty chapter in the epic of Empire was being written with paddle, axe and gun¹.

By the middle of the 18th century travel routes had been established far to the west and north of Lake Winnipeg. But while the ruthless and relentless struggle between powerful rivals² for control of the fur trade of half a continent became ever more bitter—until the Selkirk grant hastened a



ways of the Athabaska-Mackenzie system. At long last a man of the white race had crossed what was to become known as the La Loche portage. And over this portage for more than a century was to flow fabulous wealth—the wealth of the fur trade of the far north. Still another channel was to bear its tribute to distant power . . . and fame . . . and beauty.

* * * *

La Loche portage leaves Clearwater river³ at a point opposite a small island in a loop of the stream some 80 miles (by water) to the east of McMurray⁴. As a portage, it differed only in degree from a score of other trails in northern and north-western Canada. True, its length of $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles was somewhat unusual and the portage track itself—ultimately widened to accommodate wheeled traffic⁵—was wider and more carefully located than was customary. The difference in elevation—approximately 450 feet—between the northern and southern termini⁶ was notable but was not unduly great. For the rest, it crosses a belt of typical northern terrain—rolling sand ridges, clothed with jack-pine, spruce and poplar, and in the hollows, small pools and lakes, grassy sloughs and muskegs.

On leaving Clearwater river at the northern terminus, the trail crosses a heavily wooded river bottom intersected by a shallow brook, and at mile 0.5 (elevation 1050) the main ascent begins. In the next mile the trail winds upward through heavy timber, climbing approximately, 600 feet (elevation 1650). From the rim of the valley wall, a very gradual rise continues to the height of land (elevation 1690; mile 2.5). The trail then falls by easy gradients to a shallow basin, skirts the western and southern shores of a small shallow lake fringed by sandy beaches, and passes through an old and extensive camp-ground (mile 4.2) at the point where it leaves the lake⁷. This was the meeting place for brigades from the north and from the south⁸; this is the rendezvous at which the precious bales of furs were exchanged for north-bound supplies; this the turning point at which hardy crews and stern masters bade each other a boisterous "hail and farewell"—and "returned again, each man unto his own place." From this point the trail resumes its winding course across the low rolling sandy ridges, crosses a low local summit (mile 6.2) and then gradually descends to its southern terminus near La Loche lake. Two and three-quarter miles from the shore (mile 9.7) one catches the first glimpse of the lake, and at mile 12.0 its broad waters are in full view. The northern shore line of La Loche lake is fringed by bedraggled muskeg and swamp and by occasional small patches of hay meadow. Through this low-lying land meanders a small and very

crooked stream, varying in width from 15 to 30 feet, on the banks of which grassy clearances still mark the sites of two former camp-grounds. The one, a few rods from the lake shore, was used during periods of low water and at one time was the site of Fort Methye Lake⁹; the other approximately one-quarter mile further up stream, was used during periods of high water, and here an important warehouse once stood. The location of the trail and general topographical features along its route are indicated on the accompanying maps.

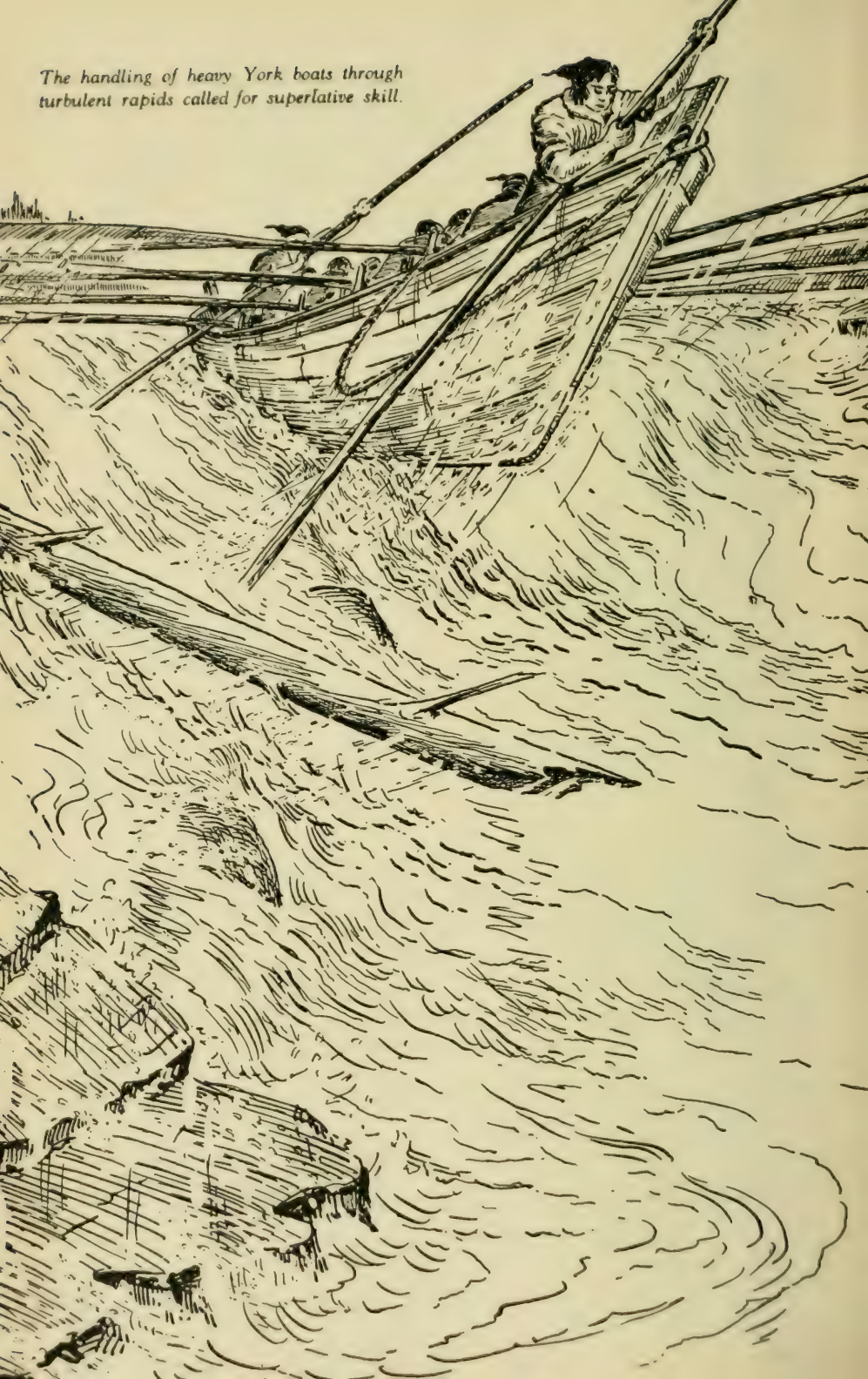
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As suggested above, La Loche portage differed only in degree from half a score of other portages which existed during the same period in north-western Canada. Why then, during the early years of the 19th century, did it achieve a



Train of Red River carts crossing La Loche portage.

The handling of heavy York boats through turbulent rapids called for superlative skill.



fame equalled by few other carrying places on the North American continent? Moslems made the pilgrimage to the Qa'bah in Mecca and thereafter were revered and revered. Voyageurs crossed the La Loche portage and attained an enviable prestige among their fellows. Why?

The answer probably lies in the fact that, during a period of more than 100 years, the portage was the principal focal point of that far-flung stage on which was unfolded the stirring and intricate drama of the early fur trade in the far north. It was a drama intensely human, often involving issues of life or death; a drama of which the actors have long since vanished but of which the theme itself has yet to be adequately recorded. And indeed in these decadent days, when the staccato of the motor has replaced the swish of the paddle; when the aeroplane has annihilated time and space and driven hardship to the most remote places; when a standardized and mechanized system has reduced exploration and the fur trade itself almost to a prosaic routine, it is not easy to clearly and correctly visualize those scenes of less than a century ago.

Undoubtedly the character of the actors themselves was the keynote of the colorful drama of the portage; explained why the portage became famous. For character has been not the least of the sacrifices that have been offered on the altar of our new and boasted "efficiency". Today, for a few weeks or months, men may perfunctorily follow the smoothly monotonous routine of river and trail—and turn with relief to the enervating comfort and taudry tinsel of our so-called modern "civilization". But less than a century ago, "trippers" and runners, *metis*, *bois-brûlés* and *coureurs-de-bois* were preeminently individualists who, almost to the point of fanaticism, took a deep pride in themselves and in their responsibilities. For they realized—albeit perhaps but dimly—that they had a definite part, however humble, in the march of epoch-making events. Thus through the long years, to its shadowed windings, La Loche drew the flower of a race of reckless, rollicking voyageurs unequalled in any other land. Masters of track-line, pole and paddle, with crimson kerchiefs bound about tanned brows, and clad in fringed and beaded buckskin, with gaudy sashes about their waists, they manned the flotillas of heavily laden canoes¹⁰ from far-off Montreal, the brigades of York boats¹¹ that forged their foaming way up swirling rapids from distant York Factory. Out of the vast solitudes of the misty north to meet the men from the east and south, came other craft laden with fur from seemingly inexhaustible game preserves and manned by copper-hued Indians of the northern tribes¹². Bowsmen and steersmen—master craftsmen and heroes of unwritten sagas without end

—directed and controlled individual boats and canoes. Hard-bitten traders and guides, steeped in the ways of the wilderness and in the devious code of the fur trade, assisted by junior clerks and aspiring apprentices, ruled all with a heavy hand. In fair weather and in foul for fifteen to eighteen hours a day, and frequently for months at a time, hardship and unrelenting toil were the common lot of voyageurs by water and by land¹³. In the early days brigades of boats or canoes usually started about 2 a.m., short stops being made for breakfast at 8 a.m. and for lunch at 2 p.m. It was not unusual to travel until 10 or 11 p.m., when crews again cooked their food, when and where they could. At a given signal, boat crews—often to the number of 150 men—lined up to receive their rations. Sometimes these were issued twice each week to steersmen of individual boats; at other times they were weighed out on the bow of a supply boat each night. Rations consisted chiefly of pemmican¹⁴, fish, tea, and, during later years, a little flour and pork. Individual crews did their



In fair weather and in foul, the boat crews hurriedly cooked their rough fare along the open shore—where and when they could.

own cooking. At night the men¹⁵, tormented in summer by innumerable flies, slept for a little in the scant shelter of forest or thicket. And far away, in the sheltered luxury of the Beaver Club in Montreal, with its lavish and open-handed hospitality, or amid the magnificence of Hudson's Bay House in London, small groups of men controlled the destinies of voyageur and trader. At their word a thousand paddles dipped in lake or stream; wintering partners set out for the wilderness, to face, perhaps, amid hostile savages, madness or starvation through the long arctic night. For the Great White Father beyond the sea must have bear skins for his stalwart grenadiers, fame and beauty, the glossy spoils of a thousand trap-lines. Through the long years this tribute flowed across La Loche portage.

* * * *

The writer has crossed La Loche portage a number of times during the past twenty-five years. But its glory has departed—only ghosts of the past still linger. Once stolid Indians and care-free *metis*, Orkneymen and reckless descendants of Highlanders who fled from bloody Culloden Field, performed prodigious feats of endurance through the long days and fought and rollicked and sang through the short nights. Now only an occasional ragged Breed, followed by his inevitable retinue of wretched starving dogs, slouches silently along.

The last occasion on which the writer crossed the portage was in the late fall of 1935. Chill sobbing breath of oncoming winter stirred leafless branches; dead leaves eddied and rustled along the rutted and grass-grown way; marshalled hosts of grey geese, wearily winging toward the south, sent down a last farewell from lowering skies. From a point where the trail topped a desolate fire-swept ridge, one caught a last glimpse of the leaden gray waters of the lake—of a distant ragged sky-line of pointed northern spruce. Then the scene was blotted out by a bend in the winding trail.

But other pictures, stark and elemental, took its place, framed by hill and valley and forest lands. For fancy was now a-winging across the northern wilderness. In imagination one saw a canoe heavily laden with trap-line gear creeping slowly up a lonely forest stream; the half-buried roof of a rude cabin with faint pennon of blue rising against the black wall of forest; a weary trapper fighting his way through blinding blizzard—breaking trail through the deep snows and followed by panting, famished train dogs. And ever in the background, grim and primitive, hovered Life and Death,—the young born under almost incredible conditions in order that some day they too might play their part in the

*"York boats forged their way up swirling
rapids from distant York Factory."*



struggle for bare existence; the old, huddling ever closer and closer above the smoky fires; ever present the sinister spectre of killing cold. For miladi must have her fur neckpiece or jacket or lined cloak.

Far away, in warehouse or steam-heated office, small groups of men passed sensitive fingers over glossy furs, pored over documents, dictated fashions. And the results of decisions arrived at were felt in the remotest parts of the great white north. From noisome hovel to luxurious salon or foyer, the way is long and devious.

Yet in northern teepee and cabin the joy of life still survives in the thrilling exhilaration of the hunt, in the brutal satisfaction of the kill, in the fascinating game of pitting cunning wits against those of the Wood Folk in their native haunts. These are the ultimate factors on which the fur trade has always rested and still rests; these the causes that lay behind the history of La Loche portage.

* * * *

FOOTNOTES

¹ According to Voorhis, historic "forts" and trading posts erected in Canada under the French regime and by the English fur trading companies numbered approximately 550.

² Notably the Hudson's Bay Company, organized in 1670, and the North-West Company ("Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest"), organized in 1783. The XY Company and certain free traders were minor rivals. The "Nor'-Westers" were the first white traders in the Athabaska-Mackenzie valleys, being followed later by men of the Hudson's Bay Company. Prior to the Conquest—notably between the years 1540 and 1717—charters were granted to some thirteen French fur trading organizations, the majority of which were subsequently merged (1719) in the Company of the Indies.

³ Formerly variously known as "Swan" or "Pelican" river.

⁴ The first port was established in 1790 by the North-West Company on the west bank of the Athabaska river and named Fort of the Forks. The Hudson's Bay Company took over the fort in 1821 and about 1875 the name was changed by Moberly to Fort McMurray in honor of a Hudson's Bay Company factor of that name. About 1888-9, owing to scarcity of fur in its vicinity, McMurray became for a time an outpost of McKay (originally known as Old Red River Fort). Of the five rapids between McMurray and La Loche portage, all except the Whitemud were run by the Fort boats.

⁵ For many years loads were taken across the portage by man-packing. Eventually oxen and Red River carts, carrying loads of approximately 800 pounds, came into general use between La Loche Lake and the head of the main descent into Clearwater valley. Between this point—the site of a large warehouse built on a grass-grown camp-ground—and Clearwater

river, loads were drawn on stone-boats by manpower until the construction of a cart track by Moberly in 1875. Although doors of warehouses on La Loche portage were unprotected by locks, stealing was unknown. Oxen were wintered at Bull's House—still a winter outpost—near the mouth of La Loche river.

⁶ Elevation of La Loche lake, 1,460 feet; elevation of Clearwater river at north end of portage, 1,010 feet; elevation of summit, approximately 1,690 feet.

⁷ Indicated on accompanying map as "Rendezvous Camp".

⁸ Men from the north and south were referred to respectively as "MacKenzie river men" and "Oxford House men".

⁹ Established by the Hudson's Bay Company about 1780 and also known as Portage La Loche Fort. Subsequently the North-West Company also established a Post on the portage.

¹⁰ The bark canoes commonly employed as freighters had high, picturesque bows and sterns. They were about 25 feet in length and carried crews of eight or nine men besides two or three passengers and twenty-five to thirty pieces of freight. Much larger canoes were used at times by the Nor'-Westers.

¹¹ "York" boats, introduced by Sir George Simpson as cargo carriers, resembled whale boats. They were approximately 40 feet long, had a beam 11 feet, and carried 110 "pieces" of 90 pounds each. They were propelled by oars, track-lines or sail, and carried a crew of eight besides bowsman and steersman. A brigade of boats or canoes was under the immediate supervision of a "guide".

¹² Barley grown at Fort Liard, ground by hand, and made into soup, was used extensively by northern voyageurs. Owing to abundance of caribou and elk, Fort Rae was an important centre for the preparation of pemmican.

¹³ On portages—good or bad—men were required to carry not less than two "pieces" of 90 pounds each. Members of crews of York boats were frequently assigned a definite weight—such as 1,000 pounds—for the portaging of which they were responsible. Voyageurs, when engaged by the year, were paid in beaver or in goods to the value of £17 to £20. Frequently they were engaged on a "trip" basis—so many "beaver" between stated points. Steersmen and bowsmen were always engaged by the year.

¹⁴ Pemmican consisted of dried buffalo (in the south) or caribou or elk (in the north) pounded to a pulp and mixed with an equal weight of tallow. It was packed in bags of buffalo hide, and the bags—each weighing approximately 90 pounds—securely sewed up.

¹⁵ A considerable number of passengers frequently travelled with brigades. They were given the same food as the crews and provided their own shelter at night. Company officials had canvas shelters either in the sterns of boats or ashore. The hurried manner in which cooking was done was responsible for many destructive forest fires. Ultimately, in 1887, the Hudson's Bay Company introduced the use of a "cook" scow.

The Song of the Pine

In a remote part of northern Saskatchewan, an old, old trail climbs from wide swampy plains to a high plateau. At the top of the ascent stands a single wide-spreading pine tree in the shelter of which natives and whites have camped through long generations. The music of the wind in the branches during a night in late Autumn awoke memories of other days and suggested to the writer the following lines.

* * * *

The palm trees wave by gleaming sands, washed by the
turquoise seas,
Above the reek of jungle lands wave tops of the highwood
trees,
On rolling wind-swept uplands the bright gorse blossoms blow,
Across the level fertile plain stand pollards—all in a row;
In the hot south, in middle lands, where northern trails grow
dim,
Lowly bush and stately tree, broad frond and leafy limb,
Each sings its song that memory stirs, in storm or vagrant
breeze,
But give me the music of tufted boughs—the song of the
great pine trees.

* * * *

Across the far-flung northern plain, o'er hill and slough, winds
weary trail,
Stifling in summer's sultry heat, stifling in winter's choking
gale;
But where it climbs from lowlands broad and tops the crest
of uplands high,
A mighty pine, like sentinel lone, lifts its high head against
the sky.

Light buck-skinned feet of northern folk, heavy shod feet of
southern men,
The pack-train flinching from the lash, the dog train straining
up the glen,
Through the long years have trod the trail—a pageant strange,
strange cavalcade—
Impetuous youth and faltering age, tall dusky Breed, full-
breasted maid.



And phantom riders urge them on—ever with whip and rein
and spur;
Primitive joy and love of life, primitive hate and lust and fear;
But, plodding north or plodding south, at the great tree they
turn aside,
To shelter from the sun and storm under the spreading
branches wide.

In gently stirring tufted boughs, softly the airs of summer
blow,
While camp-fires flicker cheerily, softly the shadows come and
go,
Whipped by tumultuous winter gales great arms toss madly
to the sky,
From lurid sheets of snapping flames, leaping fantastic
shadows fly.

Sad reproach of lonely owl, grey geese calling from the sky,
Bugle call of restless moose, lean wolves' quavering hunger
cry
Come like obligato strange—to man and maid, to old and
young,
Through firelit watches of the night the ancient pine tree
sings its song.

It sings to crying Autumn winds that sadly wail through
leafless trees,
It shouts to wint'ry gales that sweep o'er crested frozen seas,
It sighs to Spring's moist breath that stirs through budding
branch and bough,
It croons to touch of Summer's airs that whisper soft and low.

And from the past steal phantoms dim and memories crowd
amain,
Memories of heavy drifted trail, of sun-drenched northern
plain;
Memories of wind-swept spaces wide, of perils, hopes and
fears,
Stir to the voice of the lonely pine—as it sings its song through
the years!



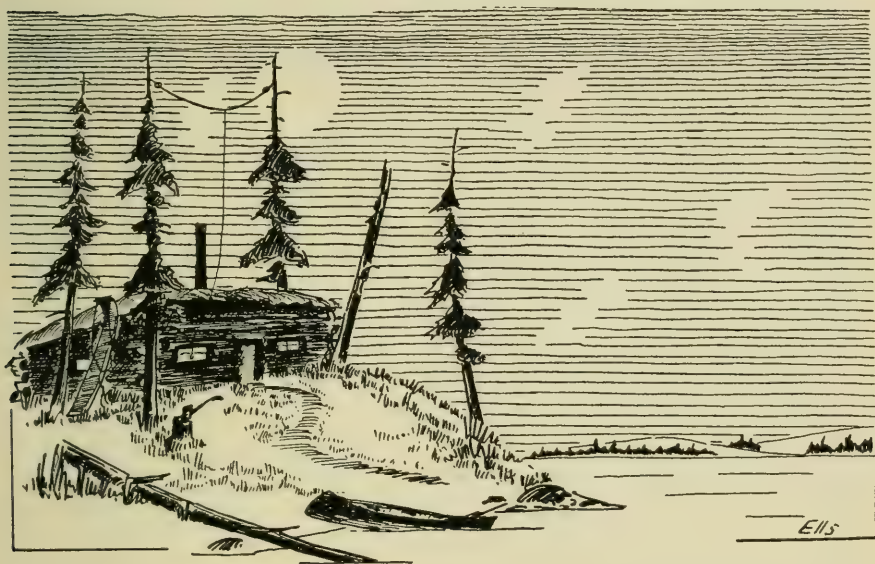
In 1933, as the result of a happy inspiration, the Canadian Broadcasting Commission inaugurated their now famous "Northern Messenger" broadcast service. During the winter months, between 11.30 and 12 o'clock each Saturday night, personal messages are accepted at and are broadcast from the Commission's studios to friends and relatives throughout Canada's far north.

In city canyons far below rolls traffic's splendor bright,
 Above, from lofty wands of steel across the brooding night
 Speed words of courage, hope and cheer, and North and South
 clasp hands

Over the trackless wilderness, over the lonely lands;
 And bonds of Space are broken and Time stands idly by,
 As over pulsing skyways the vibrant signals fly.

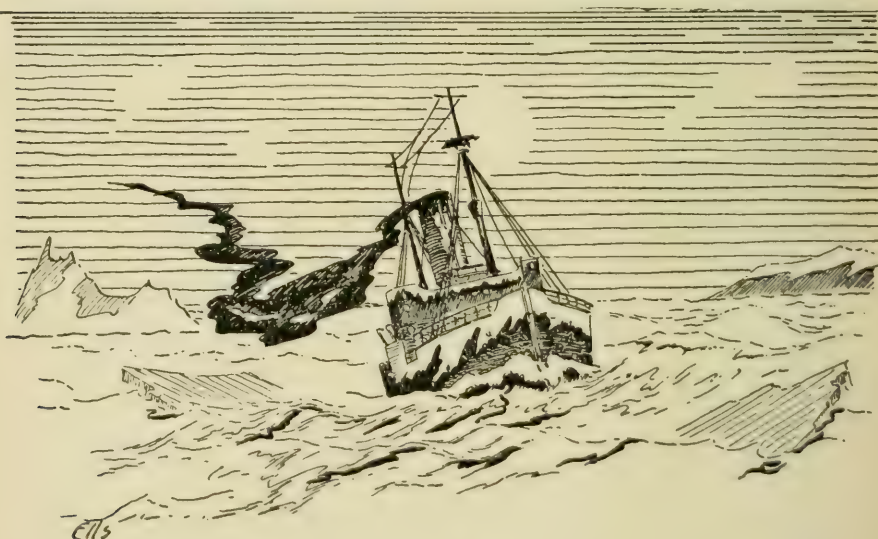
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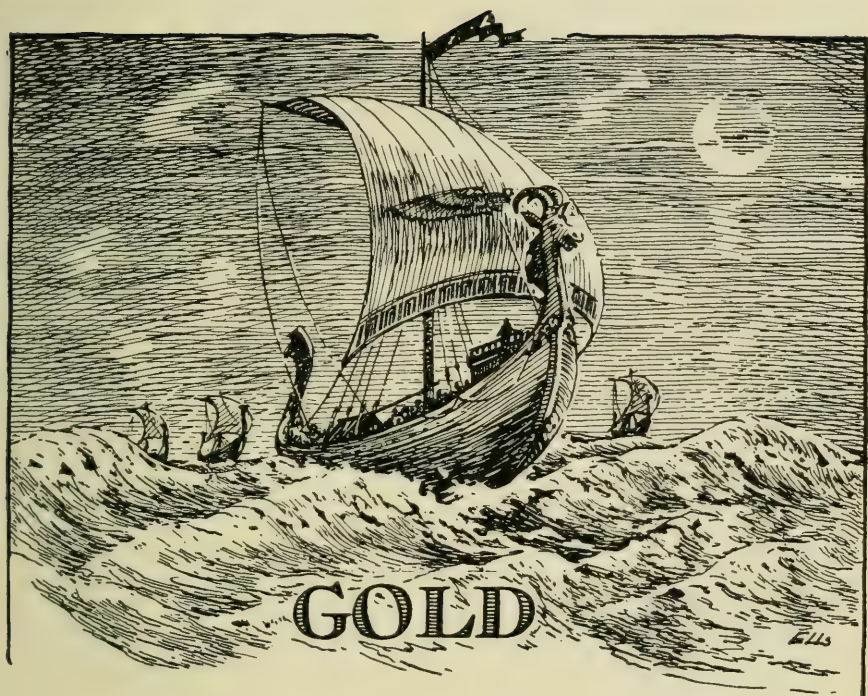
When eager Spring with dainty step comes tripping through
 the-land,
 Shy blossoms peep from sheltered nooks, touched by her
 magic wand,
 Sweet notes of silvery music from a thousand tinkling rills
 Blend with the song of rushing streams from dim blue-tinted
 hills;
 With winnowing wings and strident voice from glittering
 star-filled sky,
 The marshalled hosts of wild grey geese send down triumphant
 cry,
 While silent wings bear words of love as sweethearts' voices
 call
 To lonely cabins in the North—when shades of evening fall.



When languorous Summer steals across awakened northern
 plain,
 Bright flowers mark her footsteps, and, surging in her train
 Flows brimming tide of lusty life; through the long twilight
 dim
 Come voices of the wilderness—and song birds vesper hymn;
 There's whirr of homing waterfowl above the black lagoon,
 There's call of wings a-drumming under the summer moon,
 While unseen wings bear words of cheer when the long day
 is done,
 As wistful anxious mother calls to some far-distant son.
 When Autumn marches through the land with banners bright
 unfurled,
 Crimson and gold a-flutter across the northern world,

When sunset's golden splendor has merged in glory red,
 When over crimsoned barrens the grey night mists have
 spread,—
 Then nature, hushed, expectant, waits o'er hills and lonely
 vales
 While south-bound geese wing weary way—riders of autumn
 gales;
 Rider of lonely skyways dim, over the silent north,
 Down byways of the wilderness the Messenger fares forth.
 When winter moans through empty woods and storms o'er
 northern plain,
 Killing cold and hungry days steal silent in his train,
 And ever lurking through the wastes of the white solitudes,
 O'er hill and lake and valley, the white death's menace broods;
 Weary the heavy drifted trail, haunting the wailing cry
 Of famished wolves, as ghostly moon labors through cloudy
 sky;
 But through the tumult of the night on wings of icy gales,
 The Messenger speeds tireless way over a thousand trails.
 Before him northern gates swing wide; from lonely cabins
 rude
 The busy world's strong pulsing throb banishes solitude;
 Where ice-sheathed ship grinds ponderous way through ice-
 strewn arctic sea,
 In nameless misty valleys draped with green tapestry,
 Where slatting canvas shelter billows to driving storm,
 Out on the "land of little sticks", out on the "lands forlorn".
 To stout hearts in the lonely wastes come words of hope and
 cheer,
 As Time and Space are conquered by the Northern Messenger.





It is considered by many authorities that the earliest important gold mining operations were undertaken in Nubia, between the Nile valley and the Red Sea.

Gold

Charles Duncan, B.Sc., late of Kirkland Lake, reclined in the welcome shadow of a cliff overhanging the Wadi Akita. On his knee lay an open note book, temporarily neglected. At his feet hot sand trickled and dripped from ledge to ledge in tiny yellow rivulets or eddied away before the fitful breeze. Along the wadi itself rose scarred black walls crested with drifting sand—a silent desolation. Beyond the mouth of the wadi, under a dazzling vault of blue, the waterless desert stretched away to the shimmering horizon—lifeless, interminable.

Two years before, from the observation platform of a Transcontinental Limited, Duncan had watched the stacks and head frames of a busy mining town in northern Ontario disappear among the folds of green tree-clad hills. In the north country he had climbed the rungs of the ladder—student to graduate, mucker to drill runner, millman to superintendent. Now he was fulfilling a long cherished ambition—an ambition to once more become a student. For twenty-five years his efforts had been directed to the wresting of gold from the treasure house of Canada's new north—to produce dividends to gratify his masters, the thousands of unknown shareholders of a great mine. Now, with an assured if modest competence, he was turning back the pages—was learning something of those other miners who, in an age long past, had toiled to gratify with hard-won gold the ambitions of other masters, the ambitions of long-forgotten kings. The absorbing quest had led him through the museums and libraries of Egypt—treasure houses filled with priceless records and relics of a dim and distant past. In the teeming cities he had sat at the feet of Egyptologists whose lives were dedicated to deciphering the ancient writings and interpreting the pictured tales of Egypt's mighty deeds; in the desert he had communed with holy men of ancient Coptic monasteries; and now the long trail had led him to the sand-choked ancient workings of the long abandoned mines of Nubia. The closely written pages of his stained notebook contained not only laboriously deciphered official records, but also tales of the men who had toiled and suffered and died to make such records possible. Heretofore such tales had appeared unreal, fantastic. In the solemn silence that brooded among the scarred cliffs of the stifling wadi, they became grim realities. Closing his eyes, Duncan visualized the scenes of long ago.

Notes slipped into place like fragments of some grotesque jig-saw puzzle. Actors of a forgotten tragedy moved silently about.

* * * *

Through thousands of years under pre-dynastic kings* and under the many succeeding dynasties of the Pharaohs, a civilization and a culture which was to become the rich heritage of our forefathers, had developed in the valley of the Nile. Now, under the strong rule of the 18th dynasty, Egyptian power was fast approaching its zenith. It was an era in which, with startling openness, every imaginable form of hideous cruelty and evil marched side by side with true greatness. It was an era in which countless nameless slaves toiled and suffered and died to maintain for a few brief centuries the pomp and splendor of the ruling classes and of a powerful priesthood.

Although by nature not a warlike people, constantly expanding commerce abroad had inevitably imbued the Egyptians with imperialistic dreams. For many centuries vast wealth had poured into their land—jewels and costly woods from Naharin, copper and turquoise from the scorching valleys of Sinai, lead and precious stones from the isles of the eastern Mediterranean, ivory, gold and myrrh from the fabled land of Punt. From east and west and south came countless slaves and cattle. But of all sources of tribute, none was more prolific than the gold mines of Nubia.

The dominant power in the Mediterranean basin, Egypt was rapidly bringing under her rule those great areas which stretched away from the sparkling blue waters of the sea to the distant Euphrates—and beyond. In the Nile valley itself, strong and ordered government prevailed from Napata at the foot of the fourth cataract, to the Delta. To the east and to the west, Troglodites and Libyans had been completely crushed. Now, under the ruling Pharaoh, Thutmose III(†), long cherished ambitions of foreign conquest were being realized. The rich Phoenician coast had already been subdued, and to the north and east, smouldering ruins of ravished cities and a devastated countryside given over to the unbridled license of a brutal soldiery, told their piteous tale.

In the autumn of 1463 B.C. the Egyptian fleet was once more homeward bound. Under the press of bellying purple sail, a great war galley drove through crested seas. Two days before she had left the crowded harbor of Tyre and already the low coast of the Egyptian Delta lay like a faint blue line

*Pre-dynastic kingdoms were flourishing in Egypt 5,000 years before the Christian era.

†1479-1447 B.C.

across the horizon. Under a gorgeous canopy on the spacious afterdeck, attended by a glittering bodyguard, the powerful Pharoah reclined on a luxurious divan. Lashed to the rowing benches on decks immediately below, scores of weary slaves rested scarred bodies against long heavy sweeps. In the noisome darkness of reeking hold, hundreds of prisoners of war, men and women, living and dead, maimed and whole, lay crowded in a weltering mass. Among these was Hazdru-bel, once ruler of Paurus, and his son, Azar. Above the din of groaning timbers and the roar of rushing waters, the weak voice of the old man was scarce audible. "My son, I can leave you nothing but my lust for vengeance—and this tiny vial. In it is that which is more potent than the chariots and spears of our enemies—the deadly virus of the plague. In water it multiplies its power a million fold and those who drink . . ." A hatch was thrown open, guards with flaming torches entered. Dead and dying alike were dragged from their dark prison and cast over the side. As they seized the old man he whispered: "The vial!"

* * * *

The Pharoah's galley had entered the river, a seemingly endless line of towering transports crammed with troops, prisoners and war booty, following in her wake. On sweltering decks below, overseers lashed sweating rowers to renewed effort as they swung the heavy sweeps to rhythmic beat of throbbing drums. Under a sky of rainless blue and, when the swift southern night had fallen, under the cold radiance of the moon, on either hand shimmered the unfolding panorama of the Nile valley, with its endless sweep of garden and orchard, vineyard and wheatland. Like jewels studding the sapphire blue of the river, cool-shaded villas of the nobles and massive temples with vistas of sculptured columns, stood among groves of date and palm. Ever in the background, like emblems of eternity, rose mighty pyramids, while colossal images of kings, huge hands resting on huge knees, sat grim and motionless gazing with sightless eyes across the valley. The great highway of the river itself was alive with strange traffic,—cumbersome cargo boats and gilded barges of the rich; tiny rafts and papyrus canoes. Mud banks, sand bars and shallows teemed with crocodiles, hippopotami and pelicans.

* * * *

The capital city of Thebes had long awaited the return of the victorious Pharoah. Highways leading into the city and the streets of the city itself, were crowded with a noisy multitude through which glittering chariots and gorgeous litters forced their way ruthlessly. But now the royal galley had reached the quay. Suspended head downward from its prow,

their dislocated arms pinioned in excruciating positions, hung the seven kings of Tikhsi. On the following day the Pharoah would, with his own hands and as an official public ceremony, brutally butcher them in cold blood.

Meanwhile, successive transports were being made fast, their decks and holds disgorging the prodigious spoils of war. Down the gangplanks, to the mockery and abuse of gaping crowds, came long lines of naked prisoners, men and women, in every stage of wretchedness, their arms bound behind or lashed above their heads. Among these was Azar, bowed with misery but bitter and defiant. From the capacious holds slaves bore rich and luxurious furniture of carved ivory and delicately wrought ebony, gold and silver, vessels of magnificent workmanship, massive rings of gold and silver, the incredible plunder of conquered cities.

* * * *

Six days had been given over to celebration, six days of unprecedented ceremonies, of lavish feasts. Meanwhile, distribution of war prisoners had gone on apace. Of the more fortunate, some were given as slaves to friends of the Pharoah, some designated for work in field or garden. Others, together with condemned malefactors, were doomed to that most dreaded destiny of all—the living death of the gold mines of Nubia. And among these was Azar, son of Hazdrubel. On two occasions he had attempted to escape; twice he had been brought back and cruelly flogged. Realizing that cunning alone would avail, his attitude changed completely to one of docile willingness and servility. Now, ostentatiously avoiding contact with his fellow slaves, and on more than one occasion betraying their plans, he gradually found favor with his masters. Ability to speak foreign tongues also served a useful purpose and ultimately his tactics were crowned with success beyond his fondest hopes. A happy chance afforded him an opportunity to save the life of Horemheb, a captain of the guards, and eventually he became his trusted personal servant. Meanwhile, even as life itself, by a hundred devices he guarded the precious vial.

* * * *

The long brigade of river boats which for many days had been slowly ascending the Nile, had reached its destination at Khartak*. In huge open craft were crowded men, women and children, naked under the burning rays of the sun. The strongest, fettered to rowing benches, had toiled at the heavy sweeps under the watchful eyes of armed guards—men who spoke a different language, to whom no appeal or entreaty

*Near the site of modern Wadi Halfa.

for mercy could be made. Now the last stage of the journey, the supreme test of crossing the desert, lay before them. Stretching away from the river to the east for more than a hundred miles lay a waterless waste of sand, utterly devoid of vegetation, while beyond rose arid foothills of lofty arid ranges—the divide between the Nile valley and the Red Sea.

At the mud-walled river post preparations had already been made; hundreds of mules and oxen (†) had been assembled for carrying water and supplies. Now the long files of slaves were herded ashore; guards took up their positions. As the sun dropped below the rolling sandhills to the west, the long column moved out from the meagre shelter of knots of palms, fading into the brief twilight of the swift falling night. Under the star-filled sky complaint of burdened beasts, hoarse word of command, crack of heavy hippopotamus hide whips and answering shrieks alone indicated the line of march. Under the urge of a limited water supply, progress was rapid. At midnight, at dawn, and for a longer period during the intense heat of mid-day, halts were made. Meanwhile, the pitiless desert exacted its inevitable toll. Ever driven forward, parents saw their children fall; husbands unable to assist, saw their wives stumble for the last time. From the dazzling blue, buzzards wheeled lower and lower.

On the fourth day, like open mouths of hot furnaces yawning for new victims, appeared gaping mouths of wadis running back among the foothills. One of the famed sources of the Pharaoh's wealth—the wadi Akita—was at hand. Meanwhile, at a little distance, a grim tragedy was being enacted. The guards, who for many months had been in charge at the mines, were about to be relieved, but dreadful preparations must first be made for the accommodation of incoming drafts. Without delay, the fettered remnant of worn-out workers was driven back among the hills, where countless human bones told the awful tale of the past years. Here, without mercy, men, women and children met their doom. Another chapter of the gold mining industry had already been closed and sealed with blood when the newcomers entered the empty camp.

Before them shimmered the naked wadi winding away toward distant mountains. Above its broad pebble-strewn sand floor towered the quartz-seamed walls. A little way up the slopes stood dwellings of the guards, while on natural terraces above, roofless corrals of rough boulders marked the quarters of the slaves. Streams or springs there were none, but at long intervals violent rains submerged for brief periods

†Camels had not, as yet, been domesticated by the Egyptians.

the valley floor in a ranging torrent. Cemented tanks and reservoirs, filled at such times, afforded storage from which water was led to points where required.

In an era in which slaves were abundant, their lives and welfare were of little moment. Yet in spite of an almost incredible disregard for cost as measured in human life, primitive gold mining among the Egyptians was carried out in an orderly manner. Tunnelling to intercept veins at a depth was not attempted, and persistent effort, thoroughness and endless patience was the keynote of all operations. For the most part, ore was recovered by open cuts, shafting and stopes, in which pillars supported the roof and masonry the loose rock. The work of actual mining was assigned to the stronger men. Fires built against the rock heated the surface, which was then fractured by dashing water over it. In an arid and almost treeless region, wood was of greater value than the life of a slave and death the penalty for any man whose judgment caused him to use the water before the rock was sufficiently heated. By the flickering light of fir torches, shattered fragments were then dislodged by the use of primitive stone or metal tools.

To the older men and children fell the task of gathering up the broken ore in baskets. To them also, naked and unshod, fell the inhuman labor of carrying the heavy loads to the surface. Stumbling through the darkness over sharp-edged masses of broken rock and climbing the precarious footholds hewn in the walls of shafts, took its grim toll. The maimed who fell were left to suffer or die or were despatched forthwith. At the surface the ore was further broken by stone implements, given to the women, and laboriously reduced to powder by the use of stone rolling pins, cumbersome rubbing stones and primitive grinding mills. Finally this powder was transferred to slightly inclined wooden platforms or tables and ultimately by the most tedious and painstaking manipulation, the lighter portion was carried away by water. But woe to those whose ignorance or lack of skill caused loss of the precious metal itself. Finally the residue remaining on the tables, together with lead and salt, tin and barley bran, was sealed in earthenware pots and heated for five days. In this manner was the relatively pure gold finally produced. When the long day's work was over, all were herded into their corrals, there in sorrow to consume their meagre rations and, under the stars, to rest a little before once more resuming their unrelenting toil. Thus, naked and filthy, in misery and wretchedness, without relaxation or commiseration for sick or maimed, for old or young or for the weaknesses of women, the helpless unfortunates toiled

without respite until a welcome death to which alone they might look for mercy, brought glad release from hopeless servitude.

* * * *

Weary days had dragged into weeks, weeks into months. Then came a day when the guards manifested a new spirit. From the sandy desert waste a messenger had emerged bringing word that the "relief" was ascending the Nile. The long nightmare of the burning wadi would soon be but a memory. Already the accumulated gold had been carefully weighed, packed and sealed.* Inevitably discipline was somewhat relaxed. Plans were made by the guards for a rude celebration.

For Azar, the anxiously awaited opportunity had at last arrived. The confidence of his masters fully established, to him was assigned the preparations for the simple feast. From its secret hiding place he withdrew the vial, more deadly than the Egyptian hosts, more precious than gold itself. Above the wadi hovered the twin specters of disease and death.

Among peoples of the Near East, for many centuries prior to the Christian era, nothing was more dreaded than the deadly plague(†). Again and again its ravages had decimated the peoples and turned the unsanitary centres of population into veritable charnel houses. Without means of controlling its attacks, the helpless fear induced among its victims was not less potent than the disease itself. And now its grim spectre had entered the wadi. Before another sun had set, giddiness and faintness, prostration and thirst seized those guards who had drunk from the polluted cistern to which they now returned again and again. With contorted visages and racked by agonizing pains, they staggered about, spreading terror among the few not previously affected. The day of vengeance had dawned.

Of the two thousand slaves who, months before, had struggled across the desert, but nine hundred still survived. Liberated from their fetters, men, women and children fell upon their helpless masters with inarticulate fury . . .

A pillar of dust by day, bivouac fires by night. Troops conveying the long column of new workers were approaching. Near the entrance of the wadi, dressed in the uniforms of the slaughtered guards, and armed with their weapons, the liberated slaves awaited the newcomers. Weary from the

*Although uncertainty attaches to the actual value of monetary units, it is considered by some authorities that the annual revenue derived from the gold mines of Ptolemy II was about 12,500 talents, valued at upwards of \$180,000,000.

†Now known as Asiatic cholera and caused by drinking contaminated water.

long desert march, surprised by the suddenness of the unexpected attack, the guards were thrown into confusion. The liberation of the incoming slaves assured a dreadful victory.

Carefully matured plans were at once put into effect. Without delay and under the leadership of Azar, three thousand men, women and children, slaves no longer, moved away toward the south. Oxen and mules bore the gold of the Pharaoh. Eventually combining forces with the Nubians, their descendents, after hovering for long years on the southern boundaries of Egypt, finally swept down the Nile valley and overwhelmed the Egyptian power.

* * * *

Musingly Duncan closed his notebook, musingly he watched the hot sand trickle and drip from ledge to ledge in tiny rivulets, even as it had trickled and dripped through the thousands of vanished years—even as it would continue to trickle and drip through the thousands of years to come. Such natural phenomena went on and on—unchanging ever. But what a change had taken place in the relationships between man and man since the days of the mighty Pharaohs! Then the bitter tears and life-blood of nameless thousands was the price of sufficient gold to adorn a single mortuary chamber of some ruthless tyrant. Now the price of the selfsame yellow metal was the control and direction of harnessed power by a handful of cheerful and contented men.

Presently from his pocket Duncan drew a tattered copy of the Old Testament. During the past two years he had verified many, many of the prophetic writings of inspired men, and now, turning to the Book of Isaiah, he read: "I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians; and they shall fight everyone against his brother, . . . city against city, kingdom against kingdom . . . The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof, and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his own vomit."

Slowly and thoughtfully Duncan closed the book.

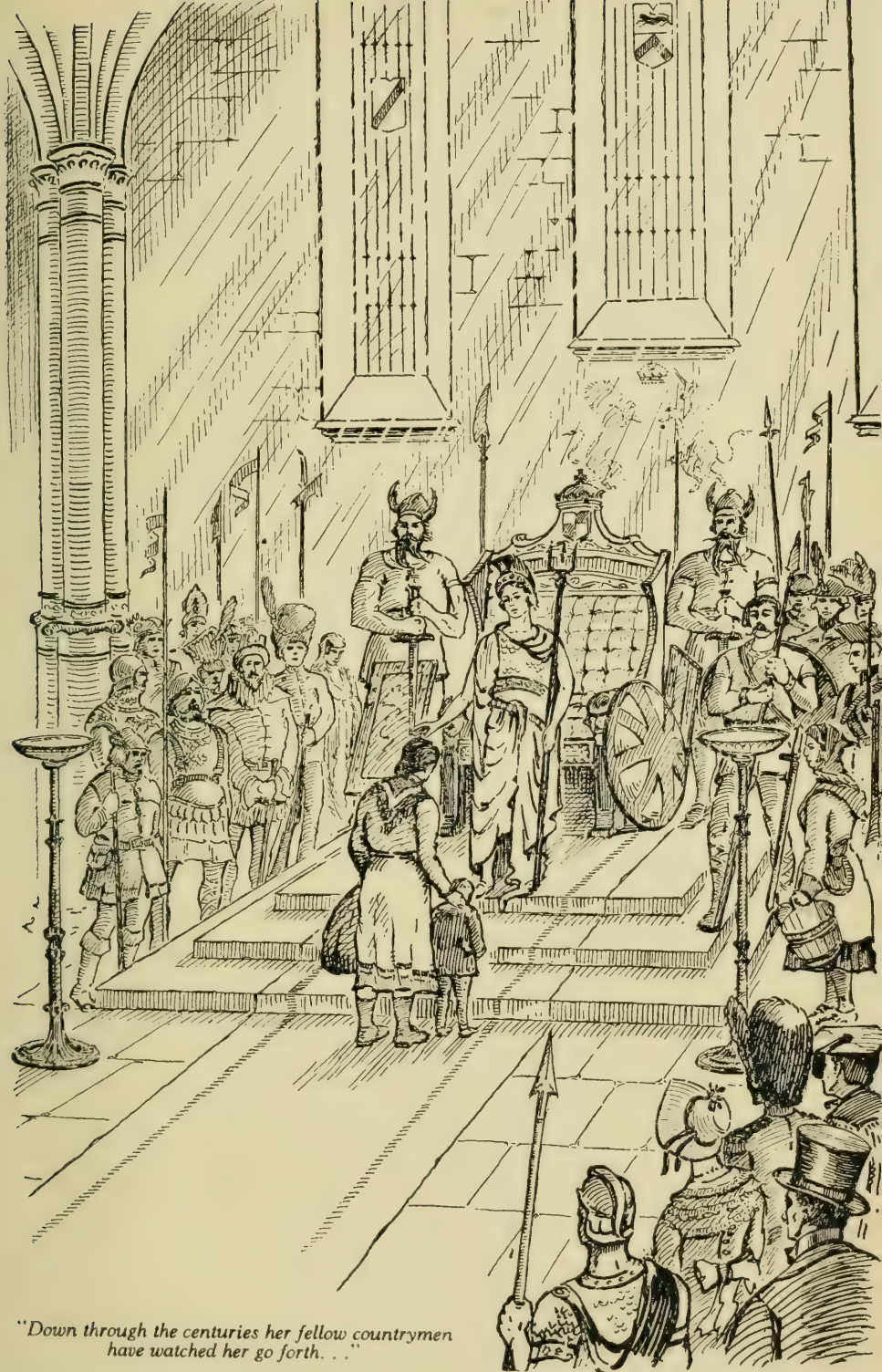
The Woman Pioneer

Only a few truly realize the deep debt we owe to those devoted women of every class who have played—and still continue to play—their part in the settlement of Canada. Down through the years their fellow countrymen have watched them go forth from the dear home land to conquer new domains. Far from the amenities of civilization, often in deadly peril of their lives, and dependent almost entirely upon their own resourcefulness, from youth even unto the 'end of the trail,' they have in very truth laid—and still continue to lay—their lives upon the altar of their country. None in all the history of Canada more truly merits an honoured place in the national 'Hall of Fame.'

*Where once the humble cottage stood, on empty western plain,
The farmstead stands mid fertile lands—and fields of waving
grain;*

*Where the strong tide of commerce flows on in tireless flood,
In the wide sweep of forest deep, the lonely cabins stood.
Strong were the men who cleared the land, and broke the stubborn
sod,*

*Strong to endure, their courage sure, the women bravely stood;
Steadfast of purpose, strong of heart, they toiled in joy or tears,
Mothers indeed of Canada—the Women Pioneers!*



"Down through the centuries her fellow countrymen
have watched her go forth. . ."

The Woman Pioneer

O stately homes of the old land,
O squalid slums of the towns,
O white walled fisher cottages,
O deep thatched cots on the downs;
Your daughters have nurtured a spirit brave,
Down through a thousand years,
Spirit of Viking and Norman bold,
Spirit of Pioneers!

They bade farewell to homeland dear, farewell to kith and kin,
No banners waved, nor bugles sang, when they sailed—new
lands to win;
Heaving deck and rail awash, roaring gale and tumbling foam,
Bitter the tears, bitter the spray, that dimmed that last long
gaze toward home.

Weary the rim of tossing sea, weary the leagues of ocean foam,
When down the path of westering sun, glimmered the shores
of new found home;
When watch fires blazed along the strand, in golden sparks
that lit the sea,
They saw the sires of household fires, on hearths of myriad
homes to be.

Lengthened the years, lengthened the trails, while through the
wilds and on the plain,
Rose the blue spires from homestead fires, lone outposts of far-
flung domain;
By lonely lake where beaver plashed, in sheltered glen where
shadows spread.
On hillside lone, by still lagoon,—where geese went honking
overhead.

Lengthened the years, broadened the trails, came the 'new
road,' the rails of steel.
While through the land on every hand, rose the low hum of
town and mill;
The furrows lengthened, mile on mile, the woodsman's axe was
laid aside,
Garden and orchard, field on field, marked the broad counties
far and wide.

* * * *

Still lengthen the years, still lengthen the trails, others still
push the frontier back,
Far to the west and far to the north, stands the rude settler's
lonely "shack;"
And ever marching in the van, through cloud and sun, through
lengthening years,
They share the conquest of the land, unsung—the *Women
Pioneers!*

The Argonauts



During the 16th and 17th centuries Spanish "Conquistadores—defaming the name of "Argonaut"—destroyed an ancient civilization and brought death and misery to untold millions of men, women and children. The monetary reward was probably less than the annual production of Canada's metal mines. It is suggested by some that the present cataclysm in Spain should be regarded as the inevitable retribution.



The Argonauts

With gilded pomp and circumstance in the "brave days of
old",

Great galleons lurched across the heaving main;
And hands of blood-stained Argonauts fondled the tarnished
gold

That brought Cain's bitter curse to lustful Spain;
Now other daring Argonauts—clean-minded, clean of hand—
March in the van of stirring pageant bold,
While from the untamed wilderness of northern wonderland
Come precious argosies of glittering gold.

There's clink of sledge on tinkling drill from gulch to timber
line—

'Neath rounded virgin breasts of sparkling snow—

And they're panning bench and river bar where spruce and
tufted pine

Hide gleaming, glinting rivers far below;

There's sob of burdened panting men, there's rasp of iron-shod
feet,—

And camp-fires' azure pennants at the dawn,—

There's click of tireless paddle in noonday's sultry heat,

As northern Argonauts press ever on.

And others tread the footsteps where pioneers have led,—

A brotherhood of sinew, brain and brawn,—

For in mill and stifling smelter hungry ore-chutes must be fed,

And other Argonauts must "carry on";

There's comradeship of service from desk to chattering drill,—

And where towering stacks and lofty head-frames loom,—

There's a bond that's forged by courage, by strength and
cunning skill

In dripping stope and galleries murky gloom!

* * * *

A mighty tide is rising; from river bench and mill

A thousand growing streams a-glittering flow,

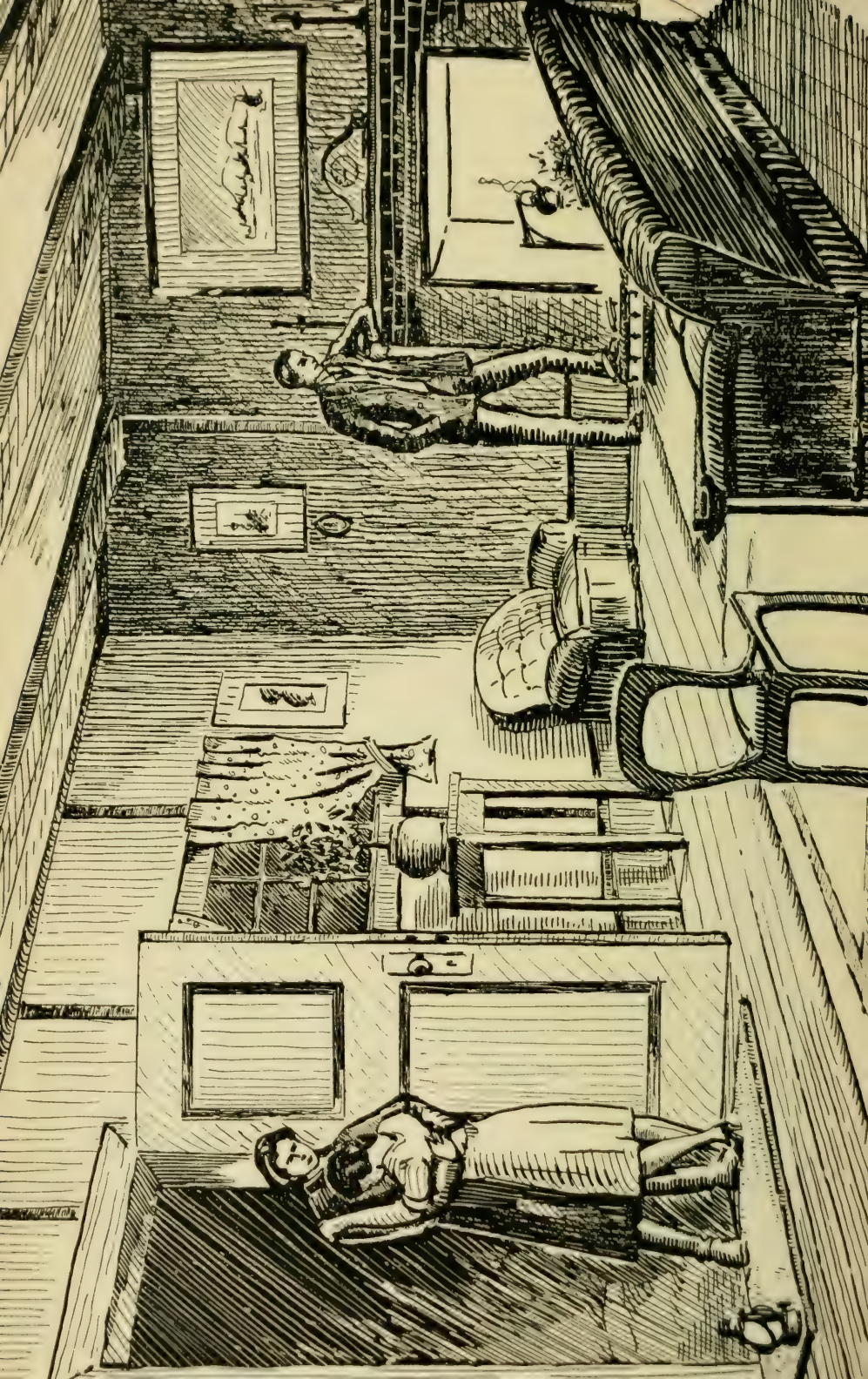
And a nation pays its tribute to the strength and stubborn
will

And the dauntless faith of men,—who won't take "No"!

Oil Shale

(Being a few notes on behalf of the pioneer women in Canada's New North)

That lusty young giant, the Canadian mining industry, was again suffering from "growing pains". With abnormal growth it was but natural, indeed inevitable, that certain unfavorable, if minor, symptoms should develop. And thus it was that once more the periodically recurring question of Canada's ubiquitous oil shales had bobbed up. Once more the usual literature, packed with the usual "facts" for the long suffering "conservative investor" and addressed to "my dear friend," flooded His Majesty's mails. It was obvious that a great source of potential mineral wealth had been overlooked. Clearly it was merely a question of so many cubic feet of shale which, by elementary calculations, might be translated into so many tons per acre, gallons per ton, and, presto chango! by a few strokes of the pen, into incredible dividends. Stupendous! And so, once more the "Rockefeller millions" were duly trotted out; once more the rosy spotlight turned on the fabulous increment in the value of Standard Oil stocks, once more the solemn note of warning sounded regarding diminishing supplies of well petroleum. Once more the same old bottles of oil appeared in head office windows coyly nestling amid lumps of alleged oil shale, "mined on our fabulously rich holdings in the north". The contents of the bottles looked like oil, smelled like oil, *was* oil—from the nearest refinery. And so, in due course, natural laws again began to function, the "conservative investor" commenced to nibble. Clearly our old friend, the Pre-Cambrian shield, might be well enough in a way as a source of gold and copper, but after all it was now realized that the real treasure-house, the fountain head of that black gold which was the life-blood of industry, nay, of civilization itself, lay in those prolific Cretaceous beds, that precious and providential heritage of northern Manitoba and northern Saskatchewan. Thereupon the oil shale "experts" pulled on the long yellow boots, squeezed and laced and belted themselves into the inevitable and indispensable khaki beloved of the cult, and hied themselves northward to turn the tap that would release mankind from the 'monopolistic thralldom' of the sinister oil barons. In due course from the densely wooded fastnesses of the Pasquia Hills and all down along the bare rounded flanks of Porcupine, Duck and Riding mountains, staking spread and multiplied until more than 100,000 acres of leases cluttered up recording offices and Departmental records. Meanwhile ornate blueprints fluttered from the printing machines like leaves in autumn.



But before the prolific Cretaceous beds had even half a chance to commence belching forth their petroliferous treasure, before the stern khaki-clad liberators had an opportunity to break the fetters of the "toiling millions"—who were even more sternly bent on burning up the maximum quantity of gasoline in their gas-buggies in connection with joy riding and other pursuits—the liberating activities caught the keen eye of an inquisitive official at Ottawa. Apparently the matter was worthy of attention and prompt action followed. Within a week Alex Kingsford had received his instructions, had assembled portable distillation retorts, drills and other equipment, and was speeding westward toward the locus of the impending oil eruptions. There had been no theoretical discussions so dear to the hearts of "blue sky" advocates. The facts when accurately ascertained and fairly stated, would meet the situation.

* * * *

Where the rolling plains of eastern Saskatchewan merge with the long bleak slopes of Duck mountains, the village of Richfield clusters about the tiny red railway station with its attendant elevators standing like tall brothers along the right-of-way. Along the "main street" straggles an irregular row of weather-beaten buildings—the inevitable Chinese cafe, branch bank, general store, garage, blacksmith shop. A little removed from the "commercial centre" lies the "residential district"—a scattered group of wooden houses and neat bungalows. There is nothing indefinite, nothing mysterious, no scope for speculative imagination about the village. It is simply—Richfield. But it was here that, after knocking about a dozen countries for twenty years, Charlie Brant, mining geologist, had established his permanent base. Telephone, telegraph, and a more or less regular mail, kept him in touch with the outer world into which from time to time he sallied forth on behalf of clients who sought his services. Of methodical habits and somewhat benign aspect, he had, at the age of 50, met Alice Ewing, a girl of half his years who, among strangers, was making her way in the commercial life of a large eastern city. He knew the loneliness of new lands, she the even greater loneliness of crowded cities. Mutual tastes drew them together, a quiet wedding followed hard on a brief courtship, and in due course the bungalow at Richfield welcomed a mistress. Suddenly transplanted from the fascination of crowded city streets, her horizon was now bounded by the sweep of wheatland, grazing range and bare treeless hills. The social orbit was that of a thousand prairie hamlets—placidly peaceful when Brant was with her, utterly boring during his periodic absences. And then, one day, the nice balance of the social planetary system was disturbed. A young doctor had hung up his shingle in the

village—an event that would pass unnoticed in a busy city, but in Richfield, devoid even of the ubiquitous cinema . . . ! For human nature, geographical boundaries do not exist.

And now even this secluded retreat was to feel the repercussions of oil shales. Kingsford required a field assistant; Brant, a contemporary of college days, "knew" his western geology. A hasty correspondence by wire, a subsequent detailed discussion of a field campaign, and Brant found himself in charge of work in the southern field. Kingsford himself hurried north and disappeared in the trackless unmapped wilderness of the Pasquia hills. But in a bungalow a woman remained—to gaze at the distant horizon, at the unchanging hills, to muse and to wonder . . .

* * * *

Summer had come and gone. Meanwhile conclusions arrived at by Kingsford and Brant had reached Ottawa; had been embodied in news-letters by an alert Department. The daily press had done the rest; the iridescent and rapidly expanding oil shale bubble had been effectually pricked. With the maledictions of a few too credulous investors, and the jeers of those who had wisely awaited an official pronouncement ringing in their ears, the erstwhile promoters departed for pastures new.

Late in October Kingsford reached Richfield for a final conference with his assistant. From the dimly lighted coach of the tri-weekly local he emerged into the blackness of driving storm. At the end of a half mile struggle through rain and shrieking wind, the cheerful living-room of Brant's bungalow—with its neatly appointed dinner table, its bright flowers, its deep capacious couch before the blazing hearth, seemed a veritable haven of refuge. A polished kettle briskly bubbling at the tip of a tiny crane completed a picture of apparent security and peaceful contentment. Somehow it occurred to Kingsford that only the thickness of a fragile window pane held back the black chaos without!

Yet through the harmony of the meal which followed, with its cheerful exchange of anecdote and reminiscence, an intangible impression recalled by a chance remark of a local resident in the smoking compartment of the day-coach grew stronger, crystallized. With new interest Kingsford's glance wandered about the room—and back to Brant and his wife. He knew the life of small communities. It seemed strange, however, that over the coffee the conversation should turn to expense accounts, the high cost of travel, and finally to the unexpected recollection that he had not sufficient funds to enable him to reach Ottawa. He must, yes, he really *must*, leave on the early morning train. Could Brant run out and

secure a small loan for him—say, a hundred dollars—until he could reach headquarters? It was a bit late, of course, but perhaps . . . A few minutes later, clad in rubber boots, oilskin coat and sou'wester, and swinging a lantern in his hand, Brant disappeared in the torrent of storm and darkness.

For a little only the ticking of a clock, the cheerful crackle of blazing wood, the occasional sound of a falling ember, broke the stillness. Presently Kingsford struck a match, held it to his companion's cigarette, lighted his own. Casually, almost whimsically, he began: "Do you know, apropos of course of nothing at all, I saw a rather curious play in New York some time ago. Ethel Barrymore and John Drew. Excellent acting, very clever, painfully intense, but a bit sad I thought. If I remember correctly, the name of the piece was 'Mid Channel'. Ever cross the English Channel? No! Well, the Johnny who wrote the play—Shaw I think it was—and a man with some experience I should judge, made out that married life is in many respects like a trip across the Channel—smooth when leaving the harbor and when making port—but sometimes a bit roughish in between. As an old traveller he opined that if you managed to get past a certain point, which in a very general way he described as 'mid-channel', without being seasick and making a bit of a mess of things, you'd probably manage to get across quite nicely. Seems simple, doesn't it—if it weren't for a lot of little things which seem to happen along quite unexpectedly. Unfortunately Shaw's characters—both paragons at the outset, mind you—got tangled up a bit in the somewhat complicated scramble that is supposed to represent the social life of London town. Some other people got into the picture who, of course, should not have been there at all, and, well, I suppose life's pretty much the same everywhere. . . ."

Tick, tock, crackle of blazing wood, sounds of softly falling embers. Presently without raising her eyes, his companion's voice, sharp and harsh, broke the silence with: "Well, Mr. Kingsford, may I ask why you are telling *me* this story?" Came the casual reply: "Well, you will remember when I commenced that I said 'Apropos of nothing at all'." Tick, tock, tick, . . . a sob, and she had burst into stormy tears. Very, very gently Kingsford laid a hand on the heaving shoulders; gradually she became calmer, reserve vanished. Thereafter what passed between them only themselves ever knew.

The door was thrown open, a gust of smoke eddied from the fire-place, for a moment the room was filled with the stormy night. Closing the door, lantern in hand, rain streaming from gleaming oilskins, Brant paused, blinking at the lights. Slowly his wife rose to her feet, showily she moved

across to where he stood—and laid her cheek against the harsh wet fabric of the waterproof. Slowly, deliberately, Brant set down the lantern and gathered her in his arms. Neither spoke.

The weather had cleared, the stars still bright, when at six o'clock the following morning Kingsford left the primitive hotel where he had spent the night. The plank platform before the tiny railway station was deserted, the train not due for a quarter of an hour. Presently he saw the light of a swinging lantern throwing grotesque shadows of Brant's tall striding figure. There was still something to be done—before the final handshake.

"Brant," he began, "we've spent a lot of time discussing dips and strikes, gallons per ton and all that sort of thing, but after all there are a lot of other things that are just about as important. For instance, did it ever occur to you that this is a lonely sort of hole—for Alice? Did it ever occur to you that once in a while she might like to have a bit of a whirl among the 'bright lights'—with you?" "But," began Brant. Without heeding the interruption, Kingsford went on: "For five months you've followed my instructions and your contract still has a few days to run. My instructions to you now are that you immediately assemble the necessary equipment, proceed by the most direct route to the city of Winnipeg, and there make a thorough 'investigation' of such dance floors, restaurants and motion picture houses as may appear advisable. As you will require a capable assistant, you will take along A. Brant of Richfield, Saskatchewan. Report should be submitted to me in duplicate." A long wail of the whistle of the oncoming locomotive ended further conversation.

A month later Kingsford was penning the concluding paragraph of his "Report on Field Operations for the Season, 19—", when a Departmental messenger dropped a letter on his desk. It was post-marked "Richfield, Saskatchewan". Within was a "Report"—in duplicate—"respectfully submitted by A. and C. Brant." As he read the "report" his expression was ample evidence that his "instructions" had been carried out in a satisfactory manner.

Presently he picked up a pen and added the following paragraph to his official report: "Thus, while it may appear that results of the season's field work as a whole were of a negative character, nevertheless certain positive and worthwhile results were obtained."

Kingsford pushed a button to call his typist.

Followers of the Grail

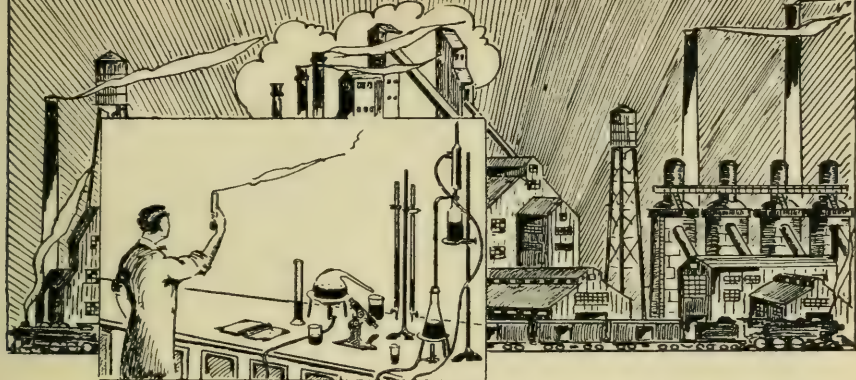
In 1928 the writer spent a few hours at Glastonbury,—“where the roots of England strike deep”. It is a shrine immortalized by the legend of that mystic chalice—the Holy Grail; a legend which illuminates that shadowy hinterland of myth and romance which preceeded authentic recorded history in Britain. It is a tale of a vessel infinitely holy, held under mysterious guardianship, walled about by perils and accessible only to the pure and brave; of a vessel which once found, conferred upon the finder the loftiest desires of body and of soul.

Today, consciously or sub-consciously, the lives of many men are actuated by motives similar to those which inspired the quest for the Grail. Such men go forth from our schools and colleges, even as seekers of the Grail went forth from their castles and strongholds, striving to make life easier and better for others. In the laboratory the research chemist rubs the magic Aladdin's lamp and new and untold wealth appears. Invention, by bringing more and more leisure into otherwise drab and sordid lives, has given opportunity for the fruition of genius that would otherwise have remained unfulfilled. A host of engineers make smooth the way; others provide mankind with a thousand necessities and luxuries. Medical research alone during the past fifty years has done more to raise the well-being of man than possibly any other single agency. And the men who accomplish these things are, in many instances, true “Followers of the Grail.”

* * * *

FOREWORD

*Too long the brutal call of hoarse war-horn,
The flag—inspired madness of the blind,
Have doomed the generations yet unborn,
And piled the fields with wreckage of mankind
'Gainst narrow fealties to ancient hate,
The call to broader vision louder grows,
While winnowing wind of movements big with fate
Over the troubled world refreshing blows.*



The research workers point the way, research waves magic wand;

The tall stacks rise against the skies and factories crowd the land;

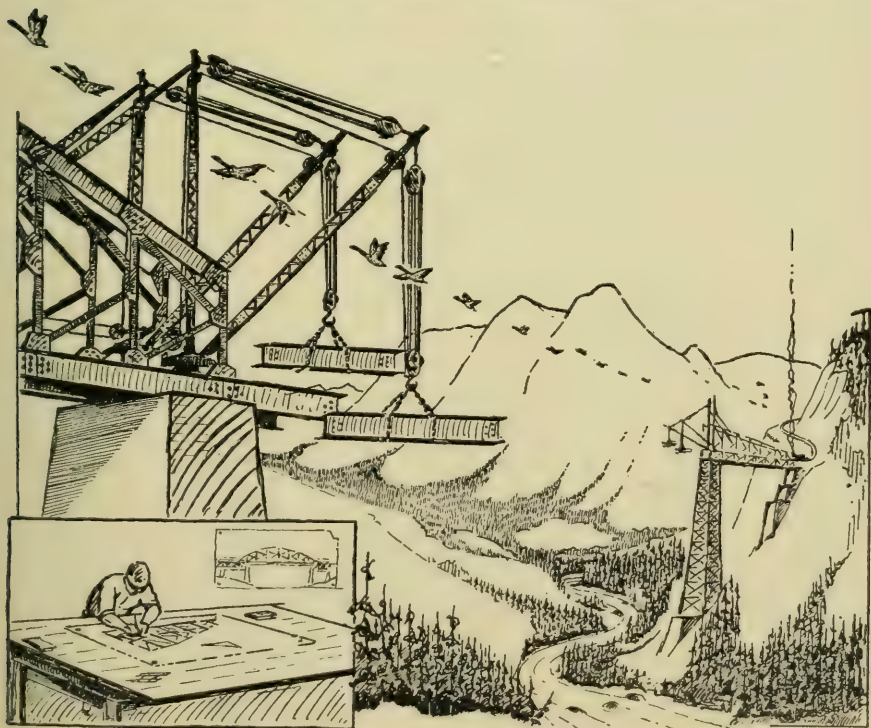
Fetters of countless sordid lives lie scattered along life's trail
As new-found leisure crowns the work of Followers of the Grail.

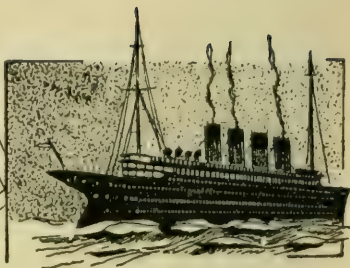
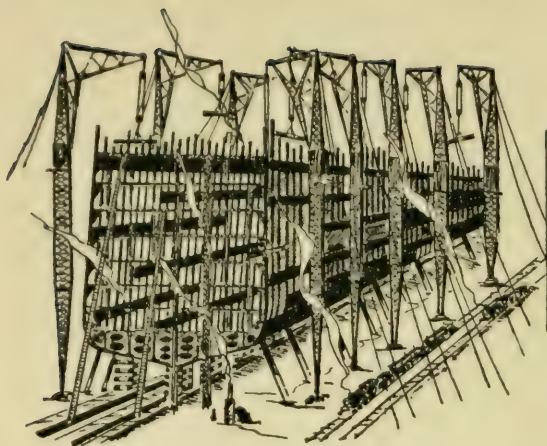
An old, old trail winds down to a ford and over snow-blocked divide,

And a new trail lies where the grey goose flies, high over the valley wide;

An engineer's vision, for countless feet, has smoothed a weary trail,

And generations bless his name—this Follower of the Grail.





Above the ways the mighty ribs of stately liners rise,
And tall skyscrapers rear their frames, black etched against
the skies;



A massive dam is rising above the valley floor,
And down the new cut right-of-way steam shovels grind and
roar.



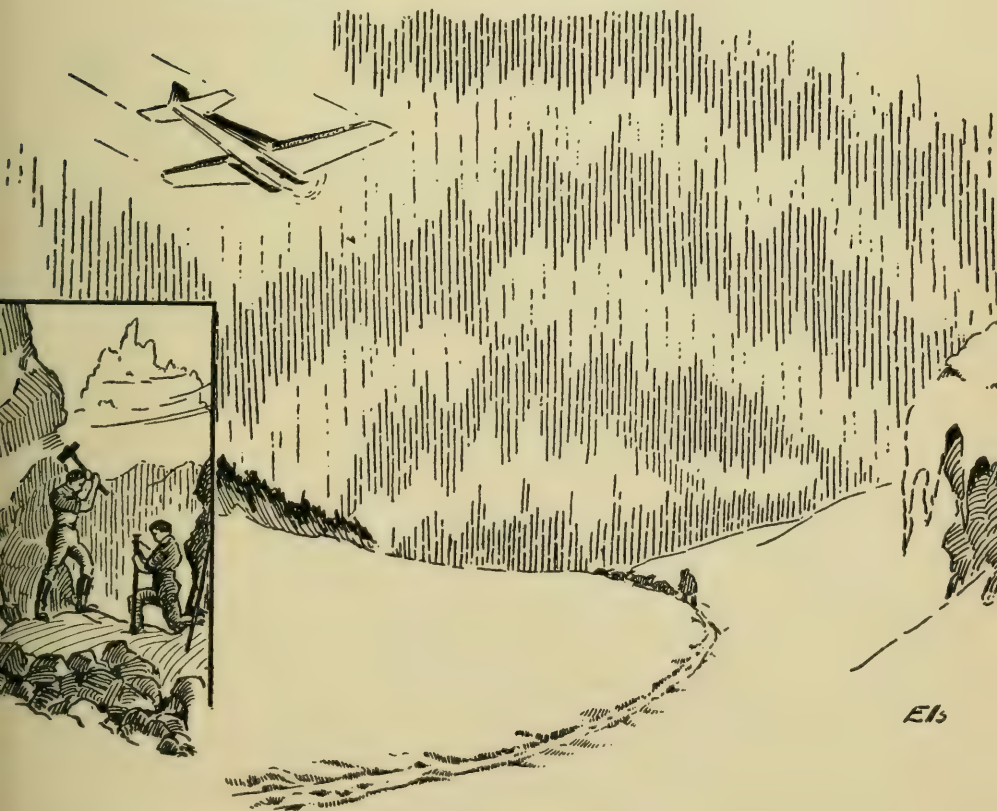
And from the swaying scaffold and from the shipyard's murk,
 And from the shovel's cabin, and from the caisson dark,
 A grimy face perchance may shine, like Galahad's of old,
 As some Knight of the Wrench and Throttle sees the growing
 job unfold.

He may see the crowded liner etched in gleaming lines of light,
 And the many-windowed precipice aglow against the night,
 The traffic's rushing splendor along the smooth highway.
 And hear the hum of turbines below the deep fore-bay.

* * * *

The great sky-sign¹ of the Northland hangs over the northern
 plain
 And the Northland beckons her children, nor beckons to them
 in vain;
 And she spreads her treasures before them with free and lavish
 hands,
 And cries "Too long have ye named me 'Canada's Barren
 Lands'."

¹Northern Lights.



Gladly her children have heard her, gladly like Knights of the
Grail,
By air and by land and by water, they have taken the long,
long trail
To wrest from the North a talisman² to conquer death and
pain,
In summer bright and the long cold night of the great north-
ern plain.

Pale death rode roughshod through the lands, and clattering
in his train
Diseases dread grim terror spread and swung red scythes
amain;
Fell plague and pestilence wrought their will on people's round
the world
Till research stemmed the grizzly host and Victory's flag
unfurled.

From frozen north to temperate zone, and where the palm
trees wave,
No more fell Plague and Pestilence, helpless mankind enslave,
No more pale Death rides roughshod, no more his hosts
prevail,
Against the gallant conquering band of Followers of the Grail.

* * * *

From class-room and from college-hall march knights of cap
and gown,
No more in mail men seek the Grail,—still beckoning on and
on,
Their banners bear a new device, sign of the coming day,
When service for the common good will men and nations
sway.

²Radium-bearing ore.

The Gad Fly

Since primitive man first peered curiously out through the leafy branches of his forest sanctuary, a restless impulse has urged him on to conquer new horizons. The ancients attributed this restlessness to the sting of the Gad Fly.

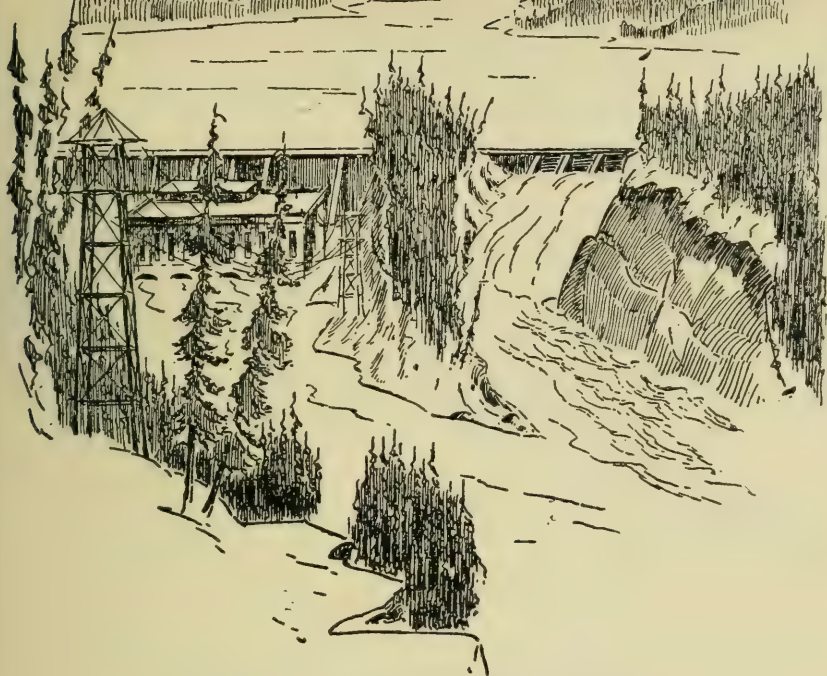
During the past 50 years, the "West", "Great West", "Last Great West", and the "New North" have gradually become merged with older Canada. There still remains the "Last North".



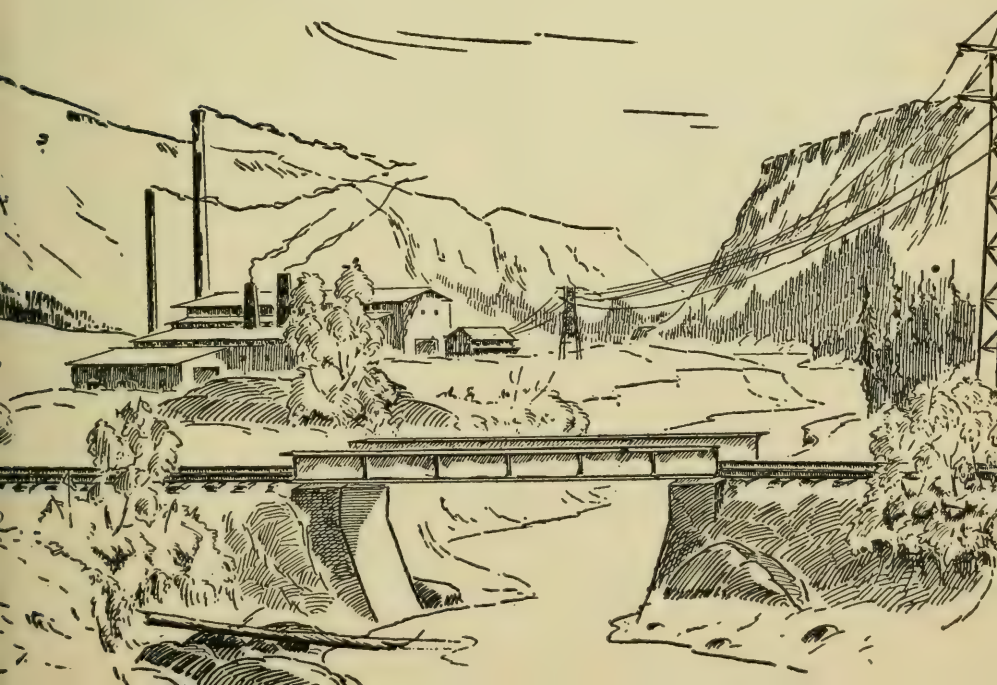
The Gad Fly

The prairie schooner lurched and dipped,
Over the western plain;
The "iron horses" followed—and fields of waving grain,
But when the fields were yellow and ripe
And home and comfort won,
They looked for other fields to win,—
The Gad Fly drove them on.





In northern wilds the head-frames rise
Against a northern sky;
By northern streams the turbines hum,
Sires of industry.
But when the "horses" harnessed were,
And when the ore was won,
Once more they turned their faces north,
The Gad Fly drove them on.





Out on the naked barren lands,—
Welter of swirling snow,—
Over the crests of frozen waves,
The dogs toil,—all in a row!
In bitter cold or torrid heat,
The Gad Fly drives men on,
To push the last horizon back,
Till the "last north" is won.



Yesterday

During a prospecting campaign in northern British Columbia, several months were spent by the writer in the chill white world which lies above timber line.

Return to civilization was effected in the late fall, by a fast trip down the turbulent Skeena in the relative luxury of one of the picturesque old stern wheel river steamers.

"Chewing a bacon rind" among prospectors of the north, was synonymous with short rations,—apparently a more or less chronic state of affairs.

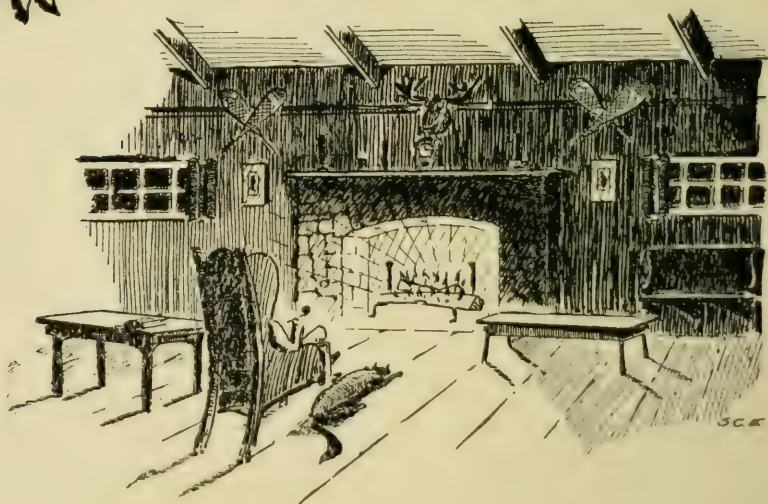


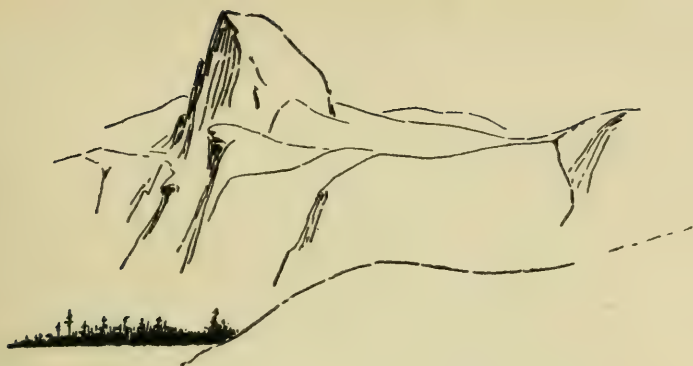
Yesterday!

S. C. Ellis.



The winds of winter howl without,
And winter storms against the pane,
The fire roars upon the hearth,
Scenes of the past come back again.
Pictures! pictures! in the smoke,
Some bright with sun, some blurred by rain,
I climb the hill and ford the stream,
And tread the wide snow field again.
Oh! there're slopes of soft green heather
On sunny mountain side,
And rugged cliffs with snowy brows
Above the steep rock slide.
Fleecy cloud and bright blue sky,
Drowsy hum of summer breeze,
Driving rain and swirling fog,
Creeping, crawling, through the trees!

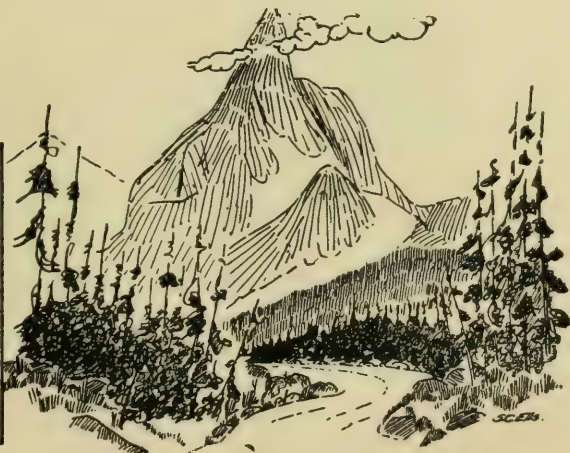




Four walls of white has my garden of snow;
 Gray and still, so gray and still!
 From distant valley, a mile below,
 Clink of hammer and tinkle of drill;
 Roar of distant mountain slide,
 Softly, softly on the wind,
 In chilly mist of snow field wide
 I shiver,—and chew a bacon rind.



Steel gray sky and glint of gold,
 The low sun gleams through banks of cloud;
 Lifts its head like sentinel grim,
 Towering peak in misty shroud;
 Chill and cold, chill and cold,
 Sobbing breath of rising wind.
 While sedges rattle and brown leaves fall,
 I sit,—and chew on that bacon rind.





Bleak and grim, so bleak and grim!
Twisted, ragged and bare,
Stand the ruins of the forest,
Blasted, desolate, drear;
Skeletons gray that creak and groan,
Stiffly swing their arms in the wind,
While sitting there on a log alone,
I'm chewing a bacon rind.

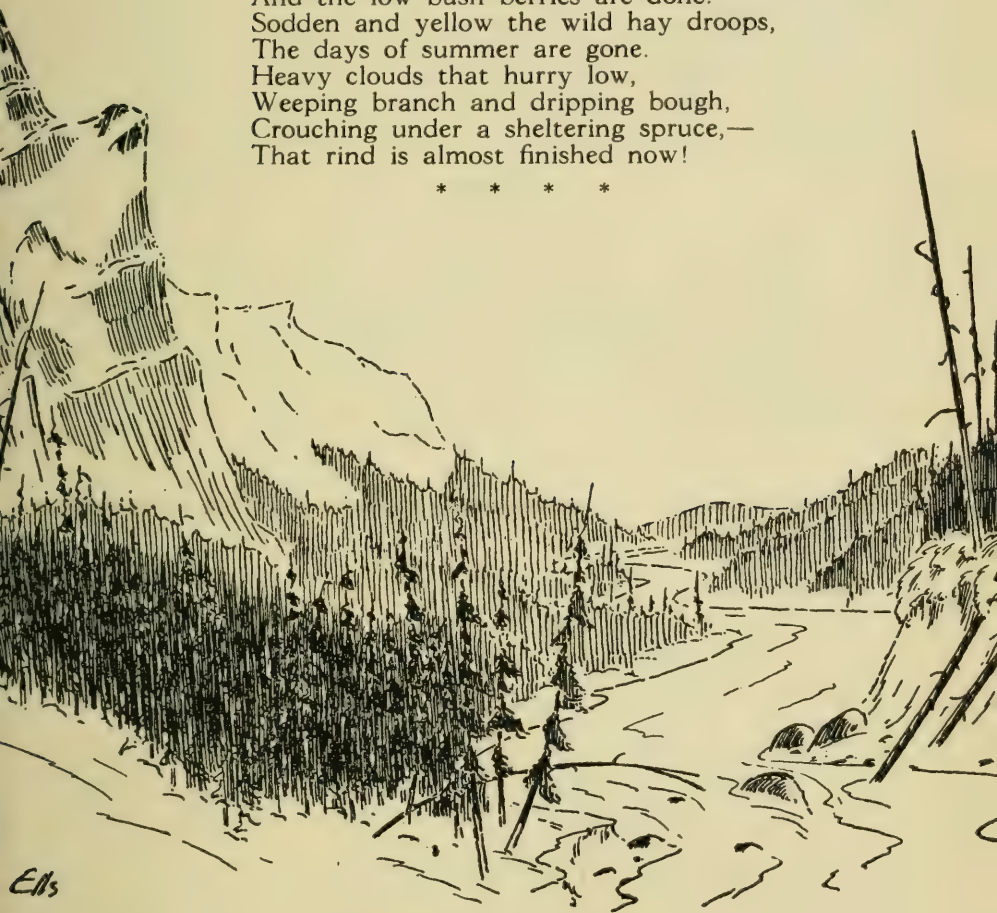


Bleak black cliffs, cold drizzling rain,
An alder slough,—and a log,
Smoky fire, brawling stream,—
Somewhere,—out in the fog;
And Oh, for the sun and bright blue sky,
Of days that are left behind,
As I sit on a log by the smoky fire,—
And chew on a bacon rind.



Drip, drip, and patter, patter,
 The yellow leaves fall clumsily down.
 Drip, drip, and patter, patter,
 Yellow leaves, and gold, and brown;
 For the high bush berries are crimson now,
 And the low bush berries are done.
 Sodden and yellow the wild hay droops,
 The days of summer are gone.
 Heavy clouds that hurry low,
 Weeping branch and dripping bough,
 Crouching under a sheltering spruce,—
 That rind is almost finished now!

* * * *



Sparks a-pouring from the stack,
 Sweating stokers down below,
 Millrace roaring from the stern,
 Roar of water at the bow;
 Cheerful warmth of state-room snug,
 Cheerful warmth,—and light aglow,
 There's warmth, and rest and shelter,—
 For that rind is finished now!

Trails

TRAILS:—In southern Canada, where once the ox-cart lurched clumsily down rutted twisting trails, the rushing splendor of modern transport speeds over smooth highways. But in many parts of the north country—the one direction in which Canada may expand—construction of mining roads and trails remains a pressing need.

Trails

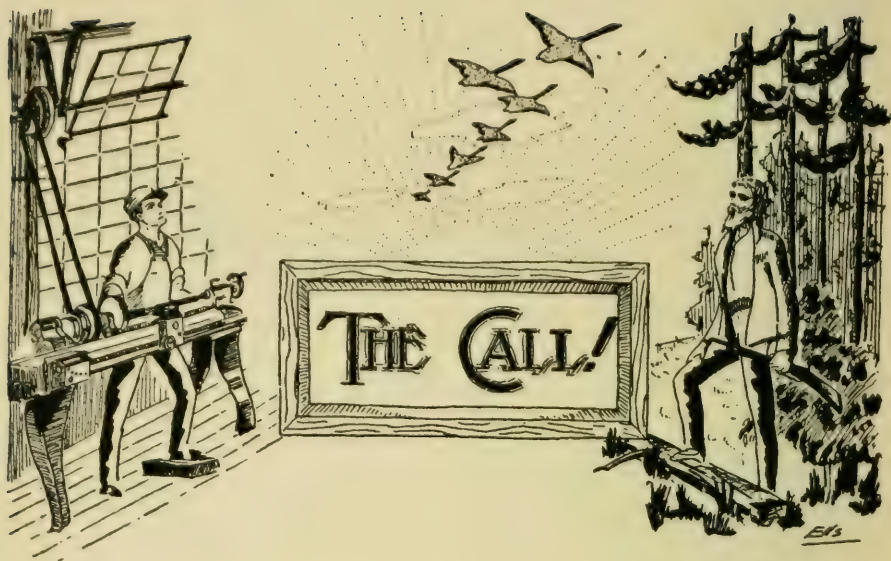
Where steep rock-slides are slithering
Neath jutting brows of snow,
And glittering gleaming glaciers
Creak onward—ponderous, slow,
Where weary wastes of slimy slough
Reek under sultry sun,
And trackless hills still beckon
When the long day is done,—
Their sweat-stained harness creaking,
At noon, at night, at dawn,
Seeking the ends of rainbows,
Men stumble ever on,
And through the North the cry goes
up—

From plains and hills and vales—
Cry of the Northland's pioneers,
The cry, "God give us trails!"



Mills a-throbbing at the dawning,
Thudding blast in stope and "room",
Ore gates clanging, chutes a-roaring,
Drills a-chattering in the gloom;
Trucks a-lurching down to rail-head
With their precious dripping loads*
While complaining gears are crying:
"Give us roads, oh! give us roads!"
Mighty stabilizing power—
Smelters, mills and chattering steel
Break the grip of grim depression—
Drive the nation's great fly-wheel!

— *Concentrates.



To the small circle of his associates, and to his still smaller circle of friends, he had always been known as Dad. As a very young man his chief interest had been centered in the Boy Scout movement, and among themselves the youngsters of his group had affectionately, almost instinctively, given him the same title. Later on, the passing years found him installed before a metal working lathe in a great industrial centre. But his disposition remained unchanged. There too, his kindly and almost benign expression, the keen grey eyes peering from beneath the black peak of his mechanic's cap, once more earned him the proud title of affection. An omnivorous reader, Dad took an almost boyish delight in tales of the great northland—not in the type of lurid romance which distorts out of all semblance the life and people of that land of majestic rivers and broad lakes, of hill and forest, of ice and snow—but in those tales of exploration which perpetuate and enshrine the true romance of any new country.

There are those who assume that the old, hardy pioneering spirit of the race, stifled by the humdrum routine and prosaic distractions of present-day civilization, faded out with the passing of the lurching covered wagon. Yet the latent spirit of the pioneer still burns as strongly as in the days of old. In some it may lie deeply buried, in others it slumbers lightly. But, stirred by the tales of the north country, the old roving spirit awakened in Dad's kindly nature. True spiritual descendant of the great souls that carried the flag of empire to the shores of the seven seas, and unrolled the map of a new

world, stronger and more clearly with the passing months and years, he heard the imperious and compelling call of the North. And so it came about that, on a memorable afternoon, while the whistles of a hundred factories and plants sounded the end of the day shift, Dad threw the strap of his metal lunch-box over his shoulder for the last time. Unobtrusively as he had come, so unobtrusively he faded out of the life of plant and city. He had struck his tent—and was on the march.

Modern civilization is a vast and complex system of frontiers, constantly advancing, constantly giving back, And frontiers spell pioneering. In the van of all great social and religious movements march the pioneers—constantly striving. Physicians, research workers, engineers, scientists—pioneers in the truest sense—are ever faced by frontiers to be advanced. The petty man-made frontiers of states, economically and often racially absurd, directly or indirectly imposing hardships and burdens, are but minor examples. But across northern Canada, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, extends still another type of frontier, a frontier which, though unmapped, is very real. It is manned by a sturdy and democratic army in which generals and privates wear the same uniform—the khaki or the blue overalls. And this army is ever engaged in a ceaseless struggle to push further and further north the frontier of ordered life and settlement.

Where does this somewhat intangible and indefinite frontier lie?—this boundary which weaves back and forth across the latitudes, an irregular seam in the fabric of Canadian settlement, ever creeping further and further northward; this line along which the virile north, hardy, aggressive and almost reckless, clasps hands with the conventional south. Go to any of the more northerly towns and cities—Edmonton, Prince Albert, the Pas, Cochrane—and you are nearing the outposts. And there may be seen one of the most fascinating human dramas of present-day Canadian life. It is a drama which finds its foci on those days when weekly, bi-weekly or tri-weekly trains leave for that most eloquent place name to be found in any railway guide—"the end-of-steel"! On such occasions you will see detachments of the "northern army" entraining for the "front line". Superficially, there is little to distinguish rookies from veterans. Some few will continue to wear the uncomfortable city garb for a few short hours longer, but most have already donned the khaki or the blue. And it was among such a jostling, cheerful crowd on the long uneven plank platform of a northern railway depot that Dad found himself one May morning some three weeks after he had snapped shut the lid of his dinner pail for the last time.



The next twenty-four hours were crowded with new sensations, strange reactions. And first of all Dad explored the train itself. A seemingly endless string of flat-cars and box-cars, terminated in weatherbeaten, antiquated day coaches, aristocratic sleepers, and the ubiquitous freight caboose. Box-cars and flat-cars, like some great departmental store on wheels, were loaded to capacity with every conceivable requirement of a new country. Car after car of live buffalo on their way to the grassy ranges of the far north; gas boats and auxiliary power schooners resplendent in new paint and consigned to Esquimaux along the rock-bound Arctic coast; drilling rigs, tractors and construction outfits; great refrigerator cars which would soon return south again, packed with the choicest whitefish and trout from the cold waters of great lakes hundreds of miles beyond end-of-steel. Box-cars were crammed with every sort of merchandise. There were oak toboggans which would be racked to pieces in the pitch holes and against the tree trunks of a thousand distant trails; radio sets that, from the farthest fastnesses of bleak snow-bound barrens, would summon crooners from sun-drenched California or prima donnas from Convent Garden; gaudy beads and tawdry silks that would gleam and shimmer for a little on dark-skinned beauty beside camp-fires of Breed and Indian, in sheltered valleys or out in "the land of little sticks"; a grand piano that, when reassembled at long last in the log cabin of some remote trading post, would crown an ambition of long years of exile. These and a thousand other things would gradually trickle away to fish camp and teepee and trapper's shack and to the uttermost ends of the north country.

The human element proved to be of no less absorbing interest. Between the free and easy overall-clad train crew and the passengers, and between the passengers themselves, there was entire absence of formality. Everyone met on an equal footing, everyone appeared to know everyone else. From conductor's van in the rear to baggage car far ahead, men and women, as though at some big family reunion, strolled up and down the long swaying aisles. From remote outposts along far-flung Arctic coast and islands, from the vast unmapped hinterland which lies between Hudson's Bay and the Rocky mountains, from silent solitudes of great lakes and rivers, for a few hours old friends would meet, gossip about past and present, and then casually part again for years. The fact that one rode in sleeping-car or day-coach indicated no social distinction—it merely reflected a temporary state of funds, the length of one's visit "outside". In the sleeping-cars, officials of fur trading companies sat cheek by jowl with dark-skinned neestaus, weather-tanned trappers, Assyrian peddlers. At the tables in the dining-car whites, Breeds and Indians, Chinamen and Japs met on common

ground, gossiped on common subjects, spoke a common language—the language of the North. A rising crescendo and reek of oranges, cheap perfume and tobacco, heralded the approach to day-coaches, crowded with native women gaily bedecked in native costume, squalling dark-skinned babies, Indians and Breeds, barefooted or buckskin shod, or with white settlers from a dozen European countries. And everywhere blanket rolls, packsacks, trail gear. Here a stalwart Breed, fiddle under chin, swaying to the motion of the train, stood madly playing the immortal lilting reel—the Red River Jig—while fifty pair of energetic feet stamped time to the irresistible call. There, carefree French-Canadians roared out the rich harmonies of chansons of Old Quebec. And in the pauses, from a corner where a group of returned men were gathered together, one heard the poignant haunting refrain,—“There’s a long, long trail a-winding, into the land of my dreams”. Rhythmic tireless click of steel wheels on steel rails; songs of other days—and dreams! Rolling north! Dad’s introduction to his new home had begun.

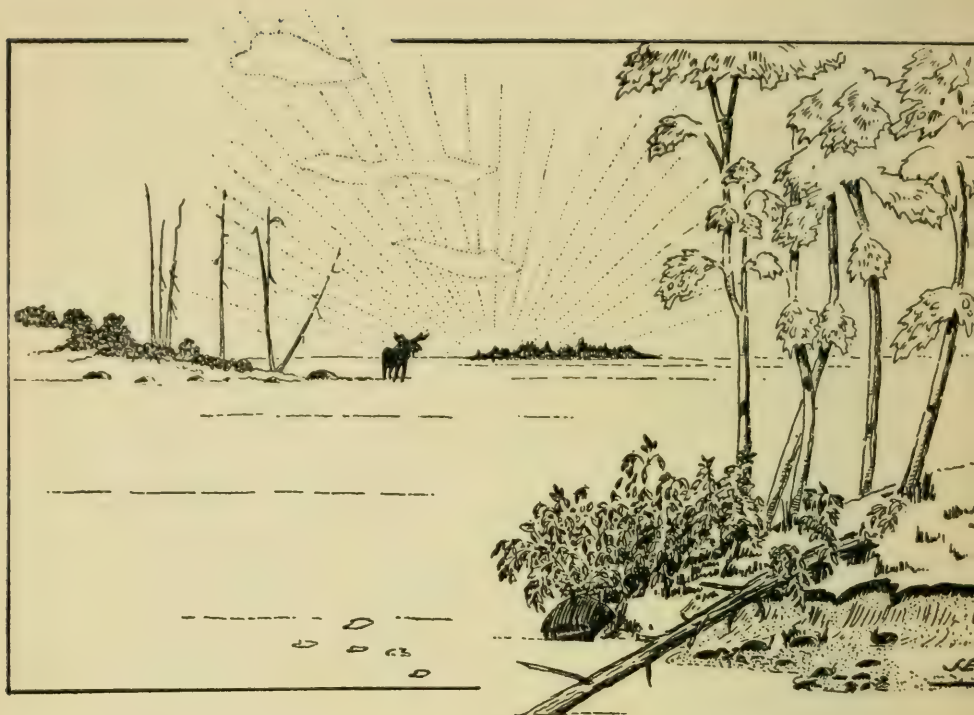
And there was much beyond the narrow confines of the train that gave Dad food for thought, for he was discovering a new world. Almost from the moment when the seventy-odd



cars moved uneasily, jarred violently into motion, and moved ponderously forward—as though hesitating before setting out on their long northern journey—a striking pageant of the onward march of settlement commenced to unfold itself before his eyes like some great drama of the silver screen. For an hour or two, thriving villages and towns, tilled fields and substantial farmsteads formed a picture of security and comfort. But gradually a change became apparent. The smooth furrows gave place, little by little, to newly-broken land where long windrows of stumps and logs awaited the flames that would sever the last link with the forest primeval. Newly-broken land gave place to areas that had been merely burned over—the burned land to virgin forest. Neat, orderly railway stations gave way to rough open sheds beside the line. Towns and villages were replaced by the standard group of general store, blacksmith shop, log school—with the rough bush road winding away and disappearing among the trees. Afterwards, Dad was to learn the meaning of that bush road. He was to know that many have followed it for the first time, full of youth and energy and hope; that with the passing years many have learned to dread its rude-significance. Of those heroic souls who know its rough twists and turns, what tales of heroism, of hardship, of suffering, what stories of joy and of broken hearts, of triumph and of defeat might be told! And ever, like a fine scarlet thread through the drab tapestry of the lives of those who have followed it “home”, the shrill cry of the woman pioneer—unattended at child-birth. For the first generation breaks the land and subdues the wilderness; succeeding generations enjoy the fruits. Small wonder that the fibre of the one is stronger than that of those which follow!

At places where the train halted, Dad saw the people of this New Canada. For on that one great day of the week they trudged in from far and near, from rough log cabin and windowless sod hut, Scandinavians and Italians, French-Canadians and Breeds, Scotch, English, Irish, and the sons and daughters of a dozen European states. In the glamor of that hour the dull hardship of their lives was for a little time forgotten. And ever in the background one saw the trim uniform of a solitary member of the Mounted Police—symbol of law and order, of justice to all, of one law for many peoples. Dad's education was progressing apace.

Finally the last traces of settlement were left behind. On either hand the empty country stretched away to the horizon—timber land and scrub, swamp and sandy plain, all merging in an unending sky line of pointed northern spruce. Long after the landscape had been blotted out Dad peered into the night watching the dazzling white beam from the laboring locomotive, as it picked out the winding right-of-way walled in by unbroken forest. In one day Dad had gone far.



The weeks immediately following his arrival at end-of-steel brought new reactions, developed new viewpoints. Finally, after careful deliberation, Dad decided to become a trapper and threw in his lot with one Bill Miller, a man of character and versed in the lore of trail and trap-line. A new chapter had been opened. Once more he had chosen a new calling—a calling in which new conditions constantly arise, in which even for the most experienced there is always something new to master. He learned to jockey a canoe or scow through the millrace of tumbling white water and tortuous channels; to shepherd safely home his faltering dog team through the stifling smother of winter blizzard. He acquired subtle cunning and a deep insight into the ways of the teeming life of forest and stream and its never-ending struggle for existence. But never did he overcome his distress at witnessing the torture and suffering that stalked the far-flung trap-line—and ended only with the death of the traps' victims.

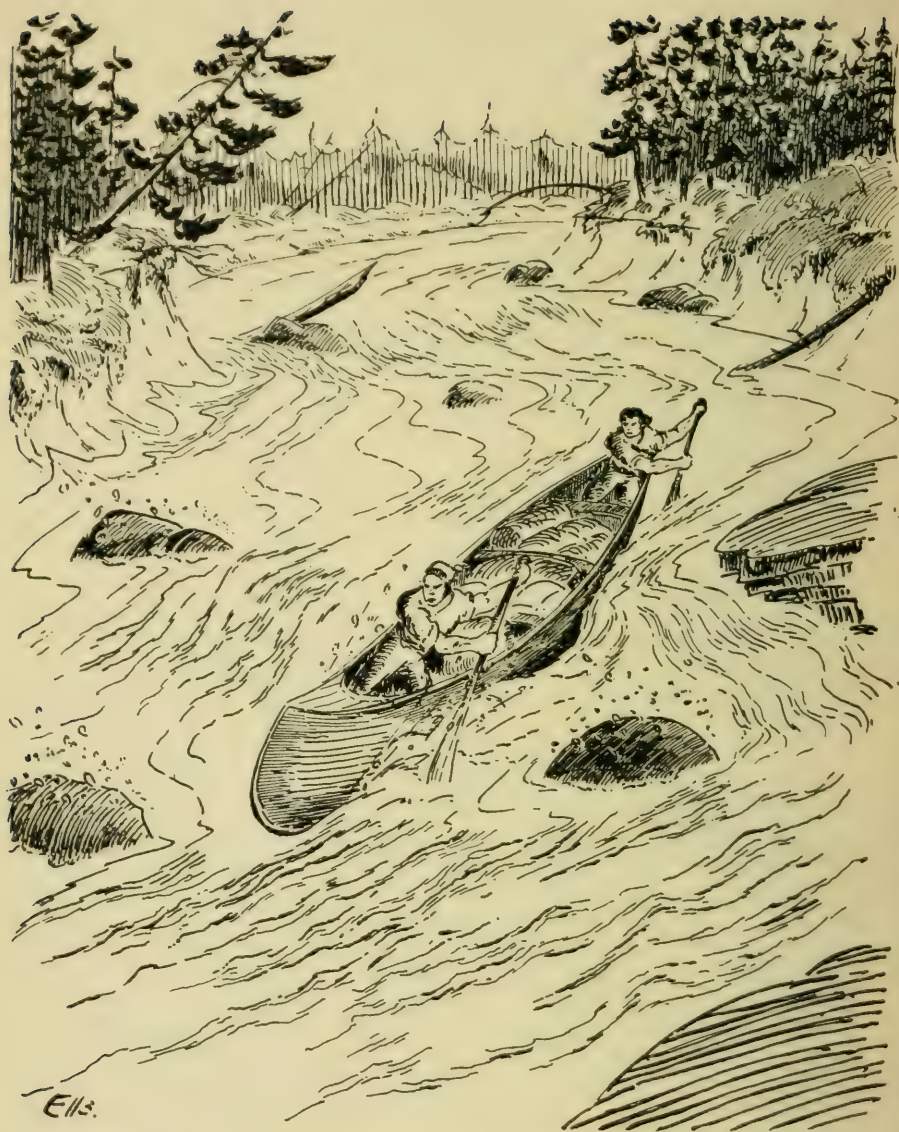
* * * *

Merged the swift-flowing seasons in swift-flowing years. Preparations made in September and October merged into the November and December hunt. A brief visit to the near-

est trading post at Christmas, another two months on the trap-line—preparations for the spring hunt. With the break-up of the rivers, disposal of the winter and spring catch, and the advent of summer, came the armistice between hunters and hunted. For a few months forest recesses ceased to re-echo the axe, the rifle, the yelping dog train. And during those years the North claimed him for her own and the *lure of the North* entered Dad's soul—a lure that has struck the keynote of many a song and story. It is a lure based on those primitive instincts which most men inherit—which all normal boys manifest before their spirits become cramped and stifled by the strait-jacket of convention. It is a lure based on a desire to live a natural life, free from the artificial and hampering restrictions of the thing called "civilization"; on a desire to enjoy health and simple comfort through the possession of a



"He learned to jockey a canoe or scow through the millrace of white water."

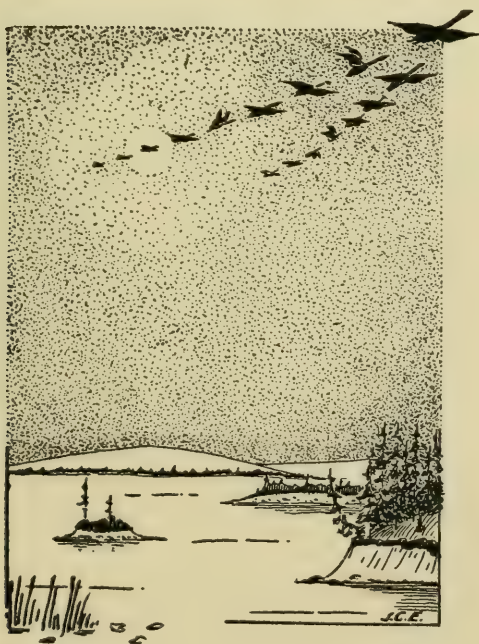


sufficiency of simple necessities; on a desire to overcome difficulties at the cost of healthy physical weariness. Vivid contrasts too have their part in strengthening and intensifying the "lure of the North". To fight one's way for hours over the frozen seas of drifted snow in sub-zero weather—and then to relax utterly in the cosy warmth and security of a well-chinked cabin; to stubbornly force a canoe up and up

through white waters, to stagger in sodden garments and under a galling pack over the long portage—and then, the day's work done, to rest by a cheerful camp-fire. These are memories which linger through the years—memories which bind men's souls. And there are those who seek independence and release . . . release from the treadmill of the machine age. More and more there are those who weary of supporting, year after year, the increasing burden of an artificial system which rests on endless and all too often futile, financial levies. To such as these the North offers, in large measure, release. To these also comes the call of the North.

* * * *

Once more the trapping season was in full swing. But a change had come over Dad; he did not throw himself into the work with his old-time energy and vigor. The routine of the trap-line, with its long cold nights spent at the make-shift "out-cabins", called for greater and greater effort, and more and more the heavier work devolved upon Miller.



On a bitterly cold day in midwinter, the two men had completed the five-day circuit of their traps, and, their toboggan heavily loaded, had at last headed the dogs for the "home" cabin. In a hissing gale, fighting through driving snow, Dad in the lead relentlessly driving himself on, was breaking the drifted trail. The monotonous creak of snowshoes, the droning of wind in spruce and jack-pine, the panting of parka-hooded men and straining dogs were the only sounds. But Dad had reached the limit of his endurance. Long before the dim snowy outline of the buried roof loomed out of the darkness he was compelled to find a place among the rigidly frozen raw furs with which the toboggan was loaded.



"Dad in the lead, was breaking the drifted trail."

During the ensuing weeks and in spite of such rough care as Miller could give, Dad gradually became weaker. At times he would recover in some degree his old strength and spirit, but at the end of the "spring hunt" he decided to make a long deferred trip to the city and consult a doctor.

Followed the regular routine—hospital, X-ray, prescribed treatment. To Dad's disappointment he was advised to remain in the hospital for a little time. But the days slipped into weeks. In spite of his return to long forgotten comfort, in spite of the luxury of a hospital cot, sun and wind and blue sky were calling—were calling! And it would soon be time to prepare once more for the winter hunt.

And then, crashing climax! In the long spotless sunlight flooded ward of the great city hospital, Dad lay with closed eyes, drowsily cheerful and contented. For days he had had no pain and, but for weakness due in part to enforced inaction, he felt fit and ready for the trail. And then, from the vicinity of an adjoining bed that had been temporarily screened off, his keen ear detected voices—a specialist and a house doctor: "... Yes, the poor chap won't follow the trail much longer. Cancer. No, it's too late to operate. May possibly last a month, may slip away almost any time. Tough as hickory' too. An old bruise no doubt. Oh, yes, you can let him move about a bit; movies if he likes. Strict diet of course." A face peered around the edge of the screen. "Sleep well, don't they—these fresh air chaps. Well, I must be off." The voices died away. Louder and louder the echo reverberated through Dad's brain—"Cancer" . . . "May last a month."

And then there swept over him an intense, an irresistible longing—a longing such as may come to a soldier gasping out his life on some shell-torn field, a longing for home—for the comfort, the security, the protection of a gentle mother's arms. With Dad the longing deepened into resolve—the resolve into plans for action. There was still time—a month they had said—to find his way home, to answer the call for the last time!

A few days later Dad's bed in the long, spotless, sunlit ward was empty. He had not returned from the movies. Those who searched for him had never heard the call of the North; they did not wire the heavy train that, even then, was ponderously, tirelessly climbing the long grades and slipping down the winding side hills. Once more Dad was rolling north!

His canoe lay near the water's edge; his trail gear in a cabin close by. In a short time the strong current had carried him beyond the outskirts of the straggling settlement and around a bend in the river. Rolling north!

Three days later he saw the old familiar blazed tree that marked the beginning of his well-beaten trail. Three more days' easy travel would bring him to blankets and supplies and firewood of his "head" cabin. With difficulty Dad swung up his light pack and slowly climbed the river bank. But the final effort was too much. It was only after five days of weary heart-break that he saw the great antlers which, years before, he had proudly fixed above the cabin door. But he had come home!

Followed days filled with pain and increasing weakness, brief intervals of respite. And then, one evening, Dad wistfully took his little tin bucket, carefully closed the door of his cabin, snapped the strong padlock into place, and slowly set out for a low sand ridge that humped its smooth, bare contour above the monotonous level of the great swampy plain. As he neared the ridge he filled his bucket from a pool. With difficulty he climbed the low hill, mechanically kindled a tiny fire, mechanically hung his kettle on a small fire-stick—and then, completely exhausted, subsided against the trunk of a lone jack-pine.

* * * *

The days of summer were gone. The long northern twilight of summer months no longer lingered; from east to west darkness quickly settled over the forbidding land. A little interval and above the ridge of low hills to the east, appeared the aura of the rising moon. As the great yellow disk began to emerge above the ragged sky line, gaunt skeletons of the fire-swept crest stood sharply etched. Soon a yellow pathway lay across the black waters of a nearby lagoon. At times a chilly, vagrant breeze blurred the gleaming mirror, stirred the yellow autumn leaves—and died away. White stems of poplar and birch along the shores were transmuted into slender pillars of silver. Presently thin wisps of night mist began to move softly about over the dark polished surface. An occasional eerie call of the great northern loon, the weird cry of a lonely coyote, the soft whir of some late homing waterfowl, alone broke the silence.

Dad's burned-out fire was quickly dying down. Here and there, where traces of resin still lingered in the pine fagots, little spurts of flame arose, flickered a moment, and quietly ceased. Silently the whitening ash of completely burned wood dropped and disintegrated into flaky dust. The little black kettle on the fire-stick ceased to bubble and sing. But Dad did not add more fuel—his pathetic little pile of broken sticks was done. In any event his



"There, a great bear but loosely held by a trap . . ."

interest in such trivial things as fires had ceased. Now his face was peaceful and relaxed. In fancy he was far, far away, eagerly following the long back trail—the trail of the summers and the winters of the vanished years. Here he had built with clumsy skill his first rude trapper's cabin and, with the blundering of the novice, hopefully laid out his first trap-line; there he had taken his first tortured fox from the trap and, as yet unhardened to the brutal code of the trap-line with its sorrows and sufferings, had mended the mutilated leg—and set the animal free. Here in the numbing cold of a winter's night, his dog team had broken through an unsuspected airhole in the ice, and only heroic bravery had averted disaster; there a great bear, but loosely held by a trap, had mauled him within an inch of his life. Here, with the thermometer standing at 40 below, he had

himself broken through the ice and had barely reached his cabin after stumbling for miles on frost-bitten feet; there, the mechanism of his rifle jammed as the result of a fall, he had helplessly witnessed in fascinated awe the grim and supreme tragedy of a mighty moose dragged down—still fighting desperately—by a pack of snarling, famished wolves.

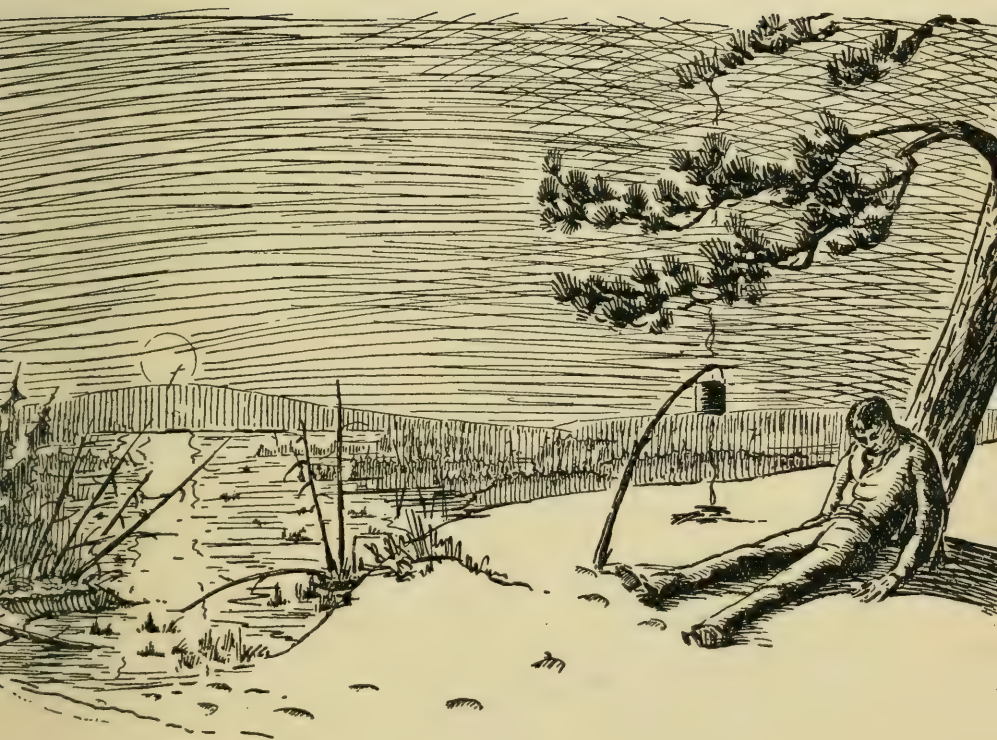
But somehow the back trail was becoming fainter—less easily followed. Somehow the scenes of the past were be-



"A mighty moose dragged down by a pack of snarling, famished wolves."

coming less distinct; somehow Dad's interest in them was waning. Anyway, he felt very, very drowsy—and tired.

Sleepily, dreamily he opened his eyes. The fire was quite dead—nothing but a heap of cold grey ashes. The little battered and smoke-blackened kettle had boiled itself quite dry. The moon was low in the west. But Dad's interest in camp-fires, or in kettles, or in the setting moon was over. Quietly he folded his hands and slept. But he had heard and answered the call. He had come home!





When blinding blizzards riot, through the long northern night,
When plains and hills lie shrouded in winding sheet of white;
When fingers of the numbing cold grope over moss-chinked
walls.

Across the northern wilderness, grim Hunger's shadow falls;
Daughter of cold and killing drought, searing with blighting
breath.

Grizzly mother of grief and pain, sad-eyed mother of death!

With biting sting of cruel lash she drives the Wood Folk on,
While sun-dogs* in the southern sky trail the pale wintry sun;
When over empty barrens the gales of winter blow,
Caribou paw for scanty moss, under hard crusted snow;
Through the great empty woodlands, over the fenlands white,
The shuddering cry of famished wolves rings through the
glittering night;

Silent through leafless thickets of brittle branches bare,
Gaunt fox and cunning weasel hunt, under the moon's cold
glare;

Trailing his foundered quarry through heavy drifted snow,
Wearily plods a trapper lone, with faltering steps and slow;
Above white desolation a croaking raven broods,
And pours hoarse maledictions on frozen solitudes!

*In winter the presence of "sun-dogs" (sun spots) near the sun frequently presages intensely cold weather.

Yet far from snow-bound barrens, and far from drifted trails,
And far from trappers' cabins in lonely nameless vales,
In luxury of sheltered homes, in cheerless garrets bare,
In hamlet, town and city, hunger is ever there.
Hunger for selfless service born of a purpose high,
Hunger for vengeance, lust and hate—sires of infamy;
Hunger for wealth and power, hunger for place and fame;
Hunger for glittering baubles and for the crowd's acclaim;
Hunger of genius unfulfilled, crushed by grim poverty;
Hunger of unrequited love, hunger for sympathy.

* * * *

But I'm weary of cities of men, with their endless struggle
and strife,
Where the treadmill ceaselessly drones its monotonous "Song
of Life";
A world of fetish and sham, of glitter and garish light,
Where night is turned into day, and day is turned into night;
Though tall many-windowed cliffs may blot out the northern
skies,
Beyond I see far fair lands—lands where the grey goose flies;
Above the harsh clamor of sound in man-made canyons below,
I hear the soft throb of tom-tom, and dog bells across the snow;
For I've drunk of the northern streams—and I hunger for
scenes that I know,
Decked in summer's bright mantle of green, or winter's white
mantle of snow,
And the great winds call from the hill tops, and the soft airs
whisper "come,"
And their voice is the voice of the northland—calling me . . .
calling me home!

The Torch

Down through the ages the torch of progress has been borne by the few. It is the few who have sown—and still continue to sow—the great intellectual harvest for the world's reaping, the harvest from which all true progress must spring. No greater epics could be written than—in more recent times—the lives of such men as Pasteur and his work on anti-toxin, of Ross and his conquest of malaria; of physicists such as Newton, von Humbolt, Faraday and Kelvin; of botanists and naturalists such as Linnaeus, Cuvrier, Audobon, Huxley, Darwin and Luther Burbank; of Herschell, the astronomer; of Lyell, the geologist; of the Curies, discoverers of radium; of Albert Einstein, the master of relativity; of Rutherford and his work on the disintegration of elements, and of the long line of great chemists headed by Priestly and Davy. These and many, many others—jealous of every hour and often in the face of hardship and privation—have kindled torches that will shine as long as time endures.

The Torch

From mountain top to mountain top, from cliff to headland
bold,
Called tongues of smoke or leaping flame of signal fires of old,
Like signal fires from age to age, calling with beam on beam,
Across the misty hills of time, beacons of progress gleam.

O'er rugged hills, through valleys dark, the trail the fathers
trod,
Was marked by toil and suffering, was blurred by storm and
flood;
Yet even brighter grew the way as flaming torches shone,
Where leaders of the growing host pressed ever on and on.

The potent strength of stalwart oak from tiny acorn peeps;
In every soul the smouldering spark of latent genius sleeps;
And some are fanned to modest glow and some to beacons
high,
And some are quenched by circumstance—and some, neglected, die.

The pondrous tubes in shadowy domes the star-strewn
heavens traverse;
In studies dim are coded, laws of the universe,
And nature's powers are harnessed, in air, on land, on sea,
And mankind follows ever on to higher destiny.

Out of the murk of roaring gale the cries for succor leap,
And from afar help rushes over the heaving deep;
And nation speaks to nation across the ocean floor,
And voices call across the world from shore to distant shore.

The sacred words upon the Mount kindled a mighty flame,
From lectern, desk and rostrum, a thousand torches gleam;
The flaming light of written word on page or ancient shard
Unbars the door to knowledge and learning's treasured hoard.

And time and space are yielding, in air, on land and sea,
Falling are age-old fetters of ancient tyranny;
A growing light is spreading before the brave array
Of those great men whose torches gleam—the men who lead
the way.

* * * *

For each of you ten thousand sires have suffered, fought and
died;
For you ten thousand mothers the pangs of birth defied.
A great inheritance is yours, the torch is in your hands;
Then guard it well and hold it high—a flaming conquering
brand!

The Trapper's Farewell

In 1931, the writer met on Firebag river in northern Alberta an old trapper named 'Dad'. For more than thirty years he had lived up and down the trails of the north country,—much of the time alone. In the school of the wilderness, happy and contented, 'Dad' had learned much true philosophy. Incidentally, still actively engaged on his trap lines at an age of more than three-score years and ten, his dearest wish was to find a last resting place among those northern surroundings which he knew and loved so well.

The north country may be all things to all men, but it usually brings out and accentuates inherent characteristics. Consequently it breeds 'types'. Under its stimulating influence, some develop in marked degree,—morally, physically and mentally. As a result of the relative absence of traditional conventions and restraining influences, a few are overwhelmed and sink to low levels.

Great tracts of the north country are covered with muskeg and slough. Dry, sandy jack pine ridges constitute the natural camping grounds. One of these, on which a twisted rugged pine had long survived summer storms and winter gales,—had been chosen by 'Dad' as his last resting place. The following lines were suggested by an evening spent in his tiny cabin on Firebag river.

* * * *

*About my tiny cabin the Autumn leaves fall fast,—
Crimson and gold like the days of youth, they call back the years
that are past;
Like the sunset years they clumsily fall,—yellow and brown and
grey,—
Withered and dry like the vanished years, they rustle and eddy
away!
And the hush of Autumn lies over the land, weaving its magic
spell,
While wavering wedges of weary geese call down a faint farewell.*



The Muskeg Lake

The Trapper's Farewell

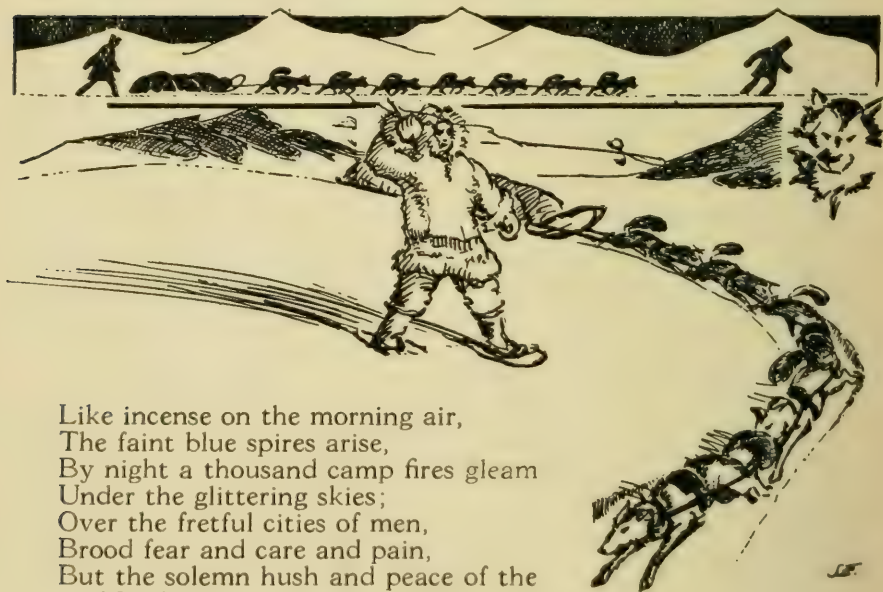
The North is a wanton and shrew,—ragged, ill tempered,
 perverse,
 The North is a mother stern,—yet a grimly tolerant nurse,
 A heartless mistress of men,—hated and loved and feared,
 But she reigns in the hearts of the northern race,—alone, un-
 challenged, revered.

The North can be harsh with her children,—or gentle as
 whispering wind,
 She can lash with the whip of her anger,—or croon like a
 Mother kind,
 She tests them with toil and peril, she tries them with hunger
 and cold,
 But she breaks the weak, for only she loves the hardy, the
 strong and the bold.

Her children may wander afar,—and grow soft in a southern
 clime,
 They may eat of the fruit of the lotus,—till visions of home
 grow dim,
 They may learn the tricks of the herd,—till the treadmill's
 monotony palls,
 But ever they'll hear the clear call of the North, when she
 calls . . . , when she calls . . . , when she calls!



By the misty coast where the Arctic Sea,
 sobs sullen and gray and cold,
 In the faraway South where forest lands are
 vivid with red and gold,
 Over weary leagues of lands forlorn, rock-
 ribbed, desolate, grim,
 Where mighty streams rolling down to the
 north, fade out in the distance dim;



Like incense on the morning air,
 The faint blue spires arise,
 By night a thousand camp fires gleam
 Under the glittering skies;
 Over the fretful cities of men,
 Brood fear and care and pain,
 But the solemn hush and peace of the
 North,
 Lies over forest and plain.

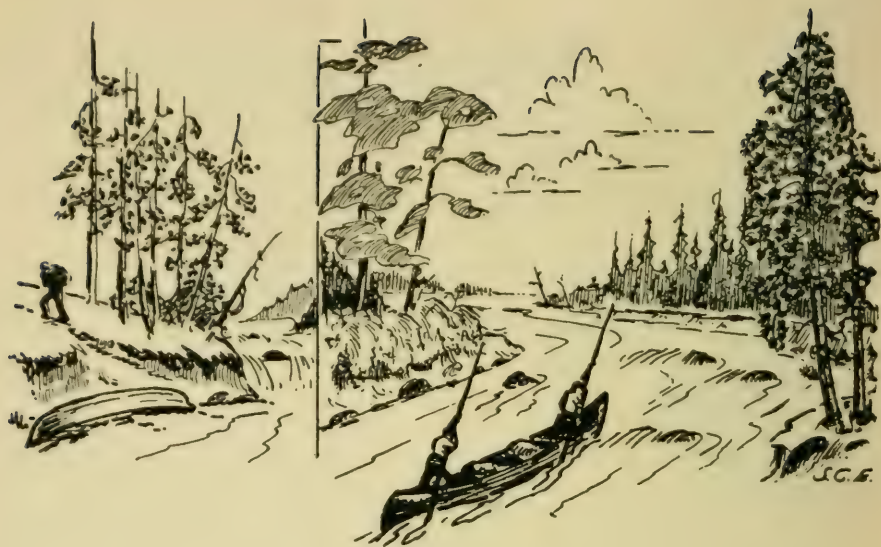


Over the hills and the treeless wastes,
Through the broad timbered lands,
Over long leagues of quaking bog, over
the arid sands;
Where curtains of mist veil foaming
streams in canyons far below,
I have followed the trails in summer's
heat, and in winter's swirling snow.

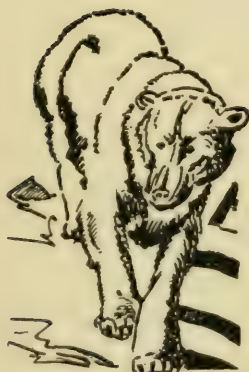
I have followed the trail of caribou fleet, of the deer the elk
and the bear;
I have matched my wits 'gainst wolf and fox with trap and
cunning snare;
I have taken the otter, the marten and mink and the snarling
great tree cat,
I have ravished the lodges and peaceful domes, of beaver and
water rat.



For the tides of life run fierce and strong,
cunning and strength spell law,
On that far-flung stage where tragedy
stalks,—naked and grim and raw,
The forest echoes the howl of the pack
and a sobbing, shuddering cry,
As fearsome chase of foundered moose
and screaming wolves streams by.



In golden haze of autumn days when red and gold leaves fall,
The bull moose trumpets his challenge, and bull moose answers
the call,
And din of crashing battle, rings through the quiet wood,
Till the vanquished, gored and trampled, welters in welling
blood.



But I'm wearying of the trail.
Let the caribou browse on the plain,
Let beaver and water rat plash
In their shadowed back-water domain,
Let the timber wolf bay to the moon,
Let the bull moose fight for the cow,
Let the foxes bark in the shadows,—
I'm weary of trap-lines now.

EPILOGUE

I ask not stately man-made shaft of stone,
Within some crowded city of the dead,
One of a mighty host,—and yet alone,
While restless feet hurry above my head.

Out on a wind swept ridge then let me lie,
A rugged twisted pine my marker rude,
Where owls' deep call and loons' sad wavering cry,
Alone will break my peaceful solitude.

Yet not alone beneath my tree I'll lie,
For all about me furry things will play,
While stately antlered monarchs wander by,
Friends of the long, long trails of yesterday.

In tugging boughs that toss against wild sky,
The roaring gale will shout an anthem deep,
While whispering winds will croon a lullaby,
And gently lull me fast asleep! asleep!!

Faint grow the trails my buckskinned feet have trod,
Faint the old landmarks, faint the headlands bold,
Fades afterglow, lengthen the shadows broad,
While flickering camp fire fades to ashes cold.

But through the gathering mists I see afar,
Other fair woodlands under cloudless skies,
And in the 'happy hunting grounds' once more,
I'll take the trail,—to greet a new sunrise!

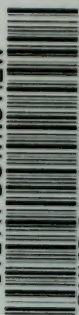
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